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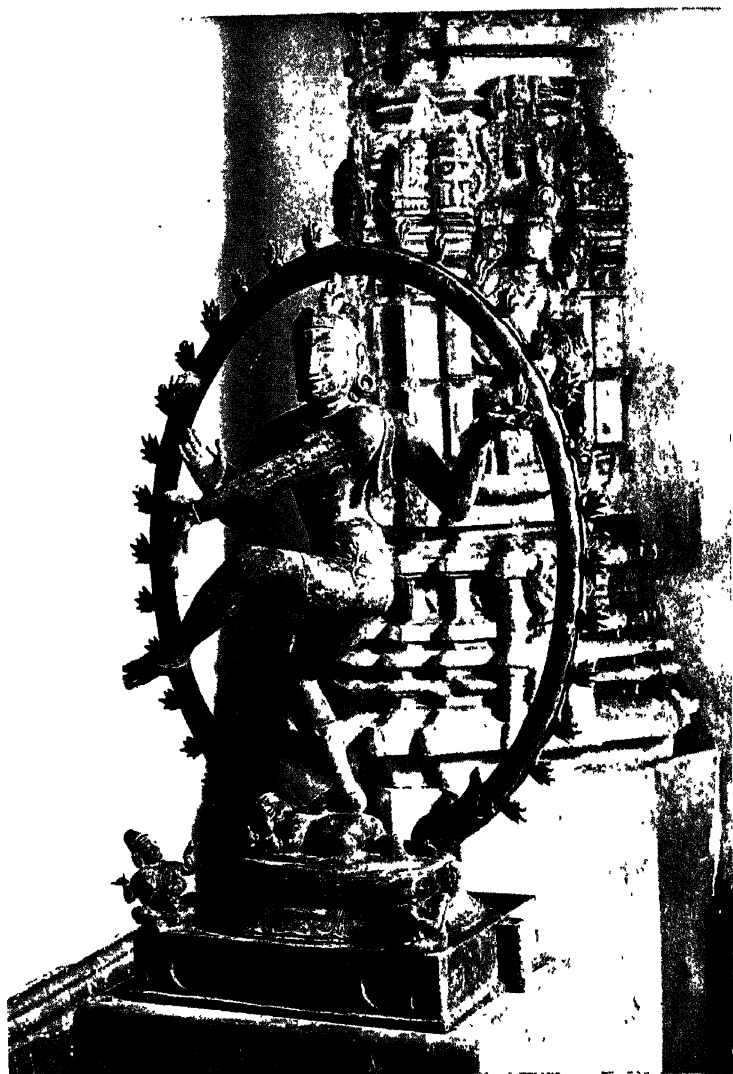
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# GOOD-BYE INDIA





*Dancing Shiva*  
(See page 163)

# GOOD-BYE INDIA

*by*

SIR HENRY SHARP, C.S.I., C.I.E.



*Geoffrey Cumberlege*

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## INTRODUCTION

HE whose way has led him through a long valley, when he nears the pass, turns back his gaze to scan the path that he has trodden. The larger features, hill, lake, or river, stand out clear. Their memory cannot easily be effaced; and, if he retrace his journey on a map, he will see them there accurately recorded. It is the wayside sights—the lanes, the cottages, the orchards, the rivulets, the flowers—that already fade in the distance; and no map will show them. And it is just these that have become familiar and agreeable to him. He would keep some image of them.

An era is coming to an end in India. The greater events of that era are matter of common knowledge and will live on in history. It is the object of this book to picture, however faintly, the simple doings and day-to-day experiences of those whose lot was cast in that time. Therefore it deals less with things of moment than with the minor activities, troubles and trifles—often frivolous trifles—that go to compose the ordinary life of the individual. Only at the close are some of the bigger problems briefly discussed.

‘Good-bye’ implies a leave-taking—here a leave-taking from an era in India’s long story, from India as we knew her, from a form of rule, from the kind of life led by those who exercised that rule. It also means ‘God be with you’; and all, of whatever creed, but those especially who have had or still have an occupation or a home in India, will join in that prayer. India is about to set forth on a voyage over uncharted seas. Our hope is that the new India may have a peaceful and prosperous voyage and that favouring winds may bring her to the wished-for bourne.

My grateful thanks are due to Mr. Ralph Wilson, who kindly lightened my task by his help in looking over proofs and suggested the inclusion of one or more sketches, made by his late wife, illustrative of village life in the Central Provinces. I have also to thank the Authorities of the School of Oriental and African Studies for the loan of some of these sketches, one of which (Indian Women drawing Water) is here reproduced.

H. S.

*April 1946*

*The fire burns low. Dark scud and driven rain  
Close the brief daylight. Dreamily on my ear  
Steal voices friendlier than the bruited drear  
Of gust along the street or rattling pane.  
A grey fox laughs across a moonlit plain;  
In clanging cavalcades the wildfowl steer  
Their starry flight; from leafy depths a deer  
Bells; faintly throbs a far-off drum's refrain.  
And, glimmering through the mist-invaded room,  
Come visions conjured by those melodies,  
Recall familiar faces, deck the gloom  
With orbs and splendour of the orient night,  
Waft fragrance of long-faded memories  
And weave new witchery from dead delight.*

## *Chapter I*

### EVOLUTION OF A SPECIES

THE days of British rule in India appear to be numbered. The Indian nationalist has demanded home rule. The British Government has assured him he shall have it. Successive reforms have paved the way to this final consummation—Morley-Minto reforms in 1909, Montagu-Chelmsford reforms in 1921, the Government of India Act of 1935. In 1942 complete independence (for Dominion Status implies the right of secession from the British Commonwealth) was generously offered; and, had that offer not been refused, representative Indians might at this moment have been sitting in Delhi or St. James's Palace and hammering out the constitution under which a fifth of the world's population was henceforth to enjoy the delights of liberty.

Parallel with constitutional reforms there has been going on a process of what is called 'Indianization', in the executive machinery. It is not always realized to what an extent Indians have long been associated with British in the tasks of administration, how large a fraction of the Indian Civil Service and of the higher judiciary was occupied by Indians, and how important a position they held, even before the Second World War, in the inner council chamber of government—a position which has now been immensely strengthened.<sup>1</sup> When the last step

<sup>1</sup> All the Ministers in the provincial Governments are normally Indians; and now Indians form a substantial majority in the Executive Council of the Governor General. As to the Indian Civil Service, the aim was that by the year 1939 there should be in it 715 Europeans and 643 Indians. There is also in each province a Provincial Civil Service, almost wholly manned by Indians. Some years ago I collected figures, which showed that the total number of officers employed (both in the I.C.S. and in the



is taken and the British *raj* vanishes, its British employees will vanish with it. The Indian will naturally prefer to take orders from Indians. There will also be the irresistible lure of the loaves and fishes. How pleasant for the scions of, let us say, a poor but respectable middle-class Bengali family to know that their uncle, who happens to hold high office, will be able to see to it that, when they attain the degree of B.A. or LL.B., their academic labours shall not go unrewarded! And it will be equally pleasant for that amiable uncle to dispense patronage among his kith and kin. British business firms will no doubt maintain their houses in India and will continue to employ a certain number of their own fellow countrymen. A few Britons will probably be asked by the central or provincial governments to fill technical posts or to undertake special duties on temporary agreements. Others may take service in civil or military capacities in Indian States. But British officials as a class will cease to exist, and the long connexion which some families have through generations had with India will come to an end.

It is one of the objects of this book to present a picture of that vanishing race of officials—their daily lives, their pastimes, and their anxieties. They present a type. It was inevitable that they should develop a type. For many of them had been nursed upon the self-same hill; and when they reached India they found themselves thrown into close relations with other members of small isolated societies, and shared with them common interests and pursuits. Unfortunately the word 'type' has come to be used in a disparaging sense, as though 'typical' were

Provincial Civil Services) in district administration was 5,500, of whom all save 630 were Indians. Below these services again there are the enormous Subordinate Civil Services—all Indians. At the same time, out of 2,500 Judges in the High Courts and the Subordinate Courts, all save 230 were Indians. Other departments, such as that of education, are overwhelmingly Indian. Local self-government is almost wholly in Indian hands.

synonymous with 'narrow-minded' or 'reactionary'. In fact, the majority of the Britons who take service in India are imbued with liberal ideas, on the testimony of Indian Ministers have worked loyally with their new masters, and have done their best to carry on the government of the country under novel conditions. Here and there a warning note is uttered; but this is prompted not so much by any desire to retain place and power as by anxiety for the welfare of the people at large and fears lest the pace of reform may lead to unhappy results. However, since 'type' is suspect, let us rather speak of 'species'—an appropriate word, since in this case, as in other species, there has been evolution. Let us take a peep into the past and briefly examine this evolution.

In respect of the character and methods of the Britons who were concerned with the foundation, expansion and maintenance of our influence in India, there may be said to be four periods or ages. The first stage may be called the age of the Nabobs. In that age there was plenty of room for reform. True it is that among the eighteenth-century warriors and administrators there were some splendid fellows—Clive, Stringer Lawrence, Eyre Coote and, above all, Warren Hastings. But there were others who, if heroic, were of the buccaneering type, like Pitt, that 'roughling immoral man', who acquired the Pitt diamond and the borough of Old Sarum and begat the father of the great Chatham. And there were yet others, not heroic at all, who enriched themselves in

the palmy days, the days of old,  
When Writers revelled in barbaric gold;  
When each auspicious smile secured a gem  
From Merchant's store or Raja's diadem.

These merely shook the pagoda tree and then hurried home to enjoy the fruit. Clive himself, great as he was, effectually lined his own purse and then tried rather

ineffectually to stop others from doing the same. The British Parliament and the British people generally showed their strong disapproval of these doings. The unscrupulous Writers, moreover, were not servants of government. It was a mercantile Company that, in self-defence against the French and surrounding chaos, won for itself an outstanding position. Its servants were ill paid. They found themselves suddenly possessed of great power. They relied upon a licence of free trade granted by a former Mughal Emperor, and they made indiscriminate use of that licence. They met potentates who, anxious to shelter from the prevailing storm, poured lakhs and land into the lap of anyone who offered security. The world then regarded corruption with a lenient eye. Control over subordinates was lacking. The age of the Nabobs is nevertheless an ugly episode in our connexion with India. Gradually abuses were checked and things settled down. But, if Indian merchant and Raja became less profitable, its servants could still rob the Company, as is illustrated by the history of a certain Mr. Snodgrass.

Mr. Snodgrass, whose name is supposed to have suggested to Dickens that of the Pickwickian, was employed on grass-farm operations on the shore of the Chilka Lake. The income from these farms, as remitted by the manager, appeared inadequate. So the Madras authorities of the Company charged a commission to go and inquire on the spot. Mr. Snodgrass welcomed the commissioners to his home and assured them that his accounts were all in order and ready for their inspection. 'But', he added, 'there is just one insignificant discrepancy which I should like to put right. I propose therefore to go tomorrow to a small island where I have a cottage and generally do my book-work free from interruption.' So next morning he set off with his ledgers in a boat, leaving the com-

missioners to discuss a sumptuous breakfast. While they were thus employed they saw the boat, which had arrived midway between the mainland and the island, suddenly founder and sink. Snodgrass and the oarsmen swam back to shore. His lamentations over this catastrophe, involving as it did the loss of his precious account-books, failed to deceive the commissioners. He was dismissed without pension and next appeared in rags as a crossing-sweeper, selecting as his pitch part of Leadenhall Street just in front of the Company's offices and wearing a placard which proclaimed to a tender-hearted public that he had been unjustly expelled from the Company's service, pensionless and penniless. The opprobrium which this pitiful sight aroused against the directors compelled them at length to grant the pension. Thereupon each of them received a courteous letter of thanks from Mr. Snodgrass inviting him to dinner, at a place unspecified, on the day when the first payment of the pension should fall due. When the day arrived, Snodgrass, faultlessly attired, drove up to the office in a four-in-hand and whisked the Directors off to the princely mansion where, in the intervals between his menial duties, he had been luxuriating on his ill-gotten gains.

The age of the Nabobs gave place to that of the Satraps<sup>1</sup>—Munro, serious and far-sighted, and that resplendent trio, Metcalfe, Elphinstone, and Malcolm, the first two reading Sophocles despite the enemy at the gate (but always with an eye on the enemy), the last zestfully joining the Indians in their sports and pastimes, and all three energetic, honest, devoted to the discharge of their high duties, fearless in face of danger, ever ready to rush into the fray, whether the fray were a boar-hunt

<sup>1</sup> For the use of this word as applied to the most distinguished of the Company's servants in that period I am indebted to Mr. Edward Thompson (*The Making of the Indian Princes*).

or a battle. Wielding great power and never shirking responsibility, they did fine work in rough-hewing the rugged material that confronted them.

The next great age was that of the Puritans—the Lawrences, Edwardes, Nicholson, and the whole ‘Punjab school’, who ruled justly and intelligently, Bible in one hand, sword in the other, and saved India when the Mutiny threatened disruption.

An Indian Civil Servant in the 1860’s wrote some lines applicable to the Satrap and Puritan ages.

I mourn the rule the Magistrate of yore,  
A fostering despot, o’er his people bore;  
He reigned supreme within his little State,  
His smile shed honour, and his frown was fate.  
Prompt with the rifle, niggard of the pen,  
By manly deeds he won the hearts of men;  
His watchful eye each rival chieftain viewed,  
And oftener calmed than curbed the rising feud.  
He knew the intense devotion that reveres  
Each usage hallowed by a thousand years;  
Nor sought to substitute with ruthless hand  
The alien systems of a distant land.  
Friend of the people, in their midst he moved,  
To all familiar and by all beloved;  
And those who gathered prattling where he came,  
Grey-headed now, still gossip of his name.

But this Kiplingesque Eden could not last. The cold blast of uninformed criticism invaded it. It was inundated by a flood of paper—circulars from secretariats, detailed orders, demands for information. The scorching beams of centralized authority withered its hardiest growths. Moreover the gardeners themselves consciously and deliberately began to interfere with the natural flora and, in hope of making improvements, to sow the seeds of exotic plants. Some of these seeds did indeed yield beneficial results. But others either fell on unsuitable

ground and perished, or produced trees which overshadowed and choked useful native herbs and sometimes bore fruits which disagreed with the inhabitants. Thus the whole nature of the garden began to change.

This change was gradually taking place during the final age, the age of the Indian Civil Servant as he was in and after the mid-Victorian era. In this period he has been described as 'heaven-born' or as 'the sun-dried bureaucrat'. The one name has an envious, the other a depreciatory, ring. True, the government of India has sometimes been defined as 'a tyranny of despatch-boxes tempered by the loss of keys'. But the district officer, the man who really kept the country going, was himself no strand of the bureaucratic tape, though he might get entangled in it. The author of the lines quoted above has recorded the contrast between the joyous activities of his predecessors therein described and the fate of the more modern civilian, doomed 'solid hours to waste among conflicting precedents and paste', to weigh the hessians turned out by the prisoners in the gaol, to penetrate the city's drainage system, to concoct sanitary by-laws, to warn the would-be emigrant of the dangers of the deep and of Assam, and to discharge 'the legion labours of a single day'. He might have added to these *Herculis aerumnas saevosque labores* the training and superintendence of a great army of Indian officials—a valuable legacy to be left to a wholly independent India. This last age may be called that of the Toilers. In the work of any Indian official to-day there is so much that must appear to the onlooker as dreary drudgery or boringly technical that to describe it, important though it is, would be a hopeless task; and one is driven back upon the lighter side of life.

But even in this strenuous and solemn age there lurked here and there a trace of Mr. Snodgrass's impishness and

a revolt against the ever-tightening control exercised by the higher powers. An echo of this spirit was current in a series of anecdotes forming a regular saga, the hero of which had retired into private life just before I arrived in India. Some of his antics are worthy of record; and, at the risk of devoting to them a space out of proportion to their relevance, I venture to relieve the gravity of this chapter with a rather lengthy indulgence in levity.

Mr. T. was a member of the Indian Civil Service who chafed under superior authority but had so far imbibed the contemporary spirit of subordination as to shrink from definite acts of disobedience. He accordingly contented himself with relieving his feelings in facetious sallies directed against higher officers, particularly against two of them whose attitude and standard of discipline clashed with his own lofty ideas of independence. One of these was the Chief Commissioner (who would now be styled Governor) of the province where Mr. T. served. The C.C., newly appointed, rather hastily came to the conclusion that the touring season was used by district officers<sup>1</sup> not for inspection and due organization of their charges, but solely for purposes of sport. So he issued an order that each officer should send to the Commissioner under whom he served a monthly diary of his doings and that a copy thereof should also be submitted direct to himself, the C.C. Mr. T. received this harsh ukase with indignation and decided that the best way of making fun of it would be to foster the very suspicions which had given rise to its promulgation. His diary therefore ran as follows: 'Nov. 15th. Hodalbad to Begumpore.

<sup>1</sup> The district officer (called in some provinces Collector or District Magistrate, in others Deputy Commissioner) is in charge of a district. Between the district officers and the Governor there are interpolated (except in the Madras Presidency) Divisional Commissioners, each of whom is in general charge of a Division or group of districts and supervises the work of his district officers.

11 miles. A lovely morning. Shot some snipe *en route*. Nov. 16. Begumpore to Palaspani. 15 miles. Another lovely day. Shot some duck this morning and ate the snipe I shot yesterday for breakfast. This outdoor life is really doing me a world of good.' And so on through the rest of November. On reading this shocking record the C.C.'s wrath was kindled and he commanded the Indian amanuensis who was taking notes of his remarks to inform Mr. T. that his diary said nothing about the cases he was trying, the result of his inspections, the state of the crops, or the condition of the people. 'In a word', added the C.C., 'you may say that Mr. T.'s diary is the most uninteresting of those that have yet reached the Chief Commissioner.' History does not relate whether the amanuensis misheard or deemed that the word 'uninteresting' was unparliamentary. Anyhow, the mis-sive, as sent on December the 8th, expressed the very opposite of what the C.C. intended. Mr. T., receiving it, scented possibilities and replied on the 13th direct to the great man: 'Mr. T. is very glad to hear that his diary is the most interesting of those that have been submitted to His Honour the Chief Commissioner.' When it was discovered from the office copy that there was every reason for Mr. T.'s retort, the following correspondence ensued: 'Dec. 16th. From H.H. the Chief Commissioner to Mr. T. Mr. T.'s Memo. dated Dec. 13th. Vide Chief Commissioner's Memo. dated Dec. 8th. For "interesting" read "uninteresting".' Mr. T. at once replied. 'Dec. 20th. From Mr. T. to His Honour the Chief Commissioner. Chief Commissioner's Memo. dated Dec. 16th. Vide Mr. T.'s Memo. dated Dec. 13th. For "glad" read "sorry".'

Mr. T. was thereupon banished to a remote and penal district and was peremptorily ordered not to address the C.C. direct but through the proper channel, namely



the Chief Secretary. Mr. T. saw in this behest a new occasion for the exercise of his ingenuity. Accordingly, when the C.C. made a flying visit to that district to see how the scapegrace was behaving and, travelling light without his tented pavilions and culinary apparatus, found himself compelled to accept Mr. T.'s invitation to dinner, the host addressed all his remarks to the Chief Secretary seated on his left and ignored the C.C. on his right. The climax was reached when, the C.C. having disposed of his portion of saddle of mutton, Mr. T. asked the Chief Secretary whether a second helping would be good for the C.C. 'This behaviour', thundered the head of the province, 'is intolerable.' 'On the contrary,' answered Mr. T., 'I am only endeavouring to give effect to Your Honour's prohibition against direct communication.'

The other person who stirred Mr. T.'s resentment was the Commissioner of the Division in which his district was situated. At that time there were still some military men in civil employ. The Commissioner was a Colonel of the spit and polish school and a martinet in discipline. Between such a man and Mr. T. hostility was bound to be engendered. Among other things the Colonel took exception to Mr. T.'s appearance at office negligently attired in a loose suit (known among those who have resided in India as a *jharun* suit) made of the flimsy chequered stuff which forms the material of the common or household duster. He addressed a letter to Mr. T. desiring him to come to office suitably dressed. Next morning the Colonel was driving in his dog-cart behind a high-stepping mare under the pitiless sun and the brazen sky of an Indian May along the glaring red road that led to the office building. Suddenly from out the cactus hedge that lined the road there leapt forth a white figure. It was the only cool-looking thing in the land-

scape. It was dressed in a white umbrella; for the rest it was as brazenly naked as the firmament above. The figure skipped down the fiery red road, the umbrella twirling above its head. The Colonel whipped up the mare and came level with the figure. 'Mr. T.,' he roared, 'what is the meaning of this disgraceful exhibition of indecency?' 'My dear Colonel,' replied Mr. T., dancing blithely along by the side of the dog-cart, 'you ordered me to come to office suitably attired. Surely this is the only suitable attire for this most damnable weather.'

On another occasion the Colonel and Mr. T. were touring in camp together. The Colonel found Mr. T. dilatory in coming to his tent when summoned for the discussion of business, and he charged him to come at once, however employed. An evening or two after giving this injunction he sent for Mr. T. The result was a commotion as the flaps at the tent door were drawn aside, and in came two orderlies out-of-breath and carrying between them one of those tin tubs which served (and probably still serve) as the usual type of bath in India. They dumped the tub down. The hot water splashed over the carpet; and through the steam there loomed the soapy form of Mr. T., seated in the bath and hastily explaining that his unconventional mode of entry was due to his earnest desire to carry out the Colonel's order to the letter.

The reader may be shocked by Mr. T.'s naughtiness. But it was nothing to the naughtiness of a Snodgrass; and even Mr. T.'s type seems to have vanished in an age of virtue. But the virtue of the present situation will be questioned by two classes of people. The die-hards (the sort affectionately known as old *Qui Hai's*) will maintain that the Satraps or the Puritans represented a more perfect standard of officialdom. They will laud the Elizabethan spirit of initiative and cast scorn on

telegraphic interference, leading-strings, and officious secretariats. They will deplore the disappearance of the simple and paternal rule and the substitution for it of a cumbersome, top-heavy, and expensive system of quasi-parliamentary government. They will point to lowered standards of administration and declare that the dictum of the eighteenth century—

For forms of government let fools contest;

Whate'er is best administered is best,

is truer than the nineteenth-century slogan: 'Self-government is better than good government.' Perhaps they will even quote Gibbon's aphorism that corruption is the infallible symptom of democratic liberty. They will certainly refer to the phenomenon that, as British dominance recedes into the background, the intercommunal struggle for power becomes more bitter and more violent. In their opinion 'the service is going to the dogs', and present conditions, far from being an improvement, exhibit only declension from a more efficient past. The other critic is the advanced Indian politician who regards the recent succession of reforms, rapid as it has been, as altogether inadequate and too timid in its advance. He will assert that the imperialistic habit of thought and the autocratic spirit are not yet sufficiently stamped out, that the official must be still more of a servant and less of a master than he is even in these days, and that his every decision, no matter how urgent the need for quick action, ought to be governed by the advice of a committee and the concurrence of representative (and therefore probably discordant) counsellors. And there we may leave the reader to consider which of these two opinions he prefers.

## *Chapter II*

### SIMPLE LIFE

WHEN I speak of the present, I don't of course mean to-day, but rather the decade which has somehow earned the epithet of 'naughty' and the first two decades of the twentieth century. That makes the period of thirty years with which I deal.

So we begin in the early years of that so-called naughty decade. It was probably no naughtier than most other decades. But it was a luxurious, pleasure-seeking age. It was as though people were aware, either by instinct or by watching the signs of the times, that England had reached the zenith of her material prosperity and were determined to make the most of it while it lasted. So there was an air of recklessness, a quickening of the tempo in the quest for enjoyment. One of the strongest impressions made upon a quiet-loving creature like myself when first entering upon the Orient was the contrast presented by the simplicity of the East to the luxury and complications of the West, the patient contentment of the oriental as compared with 'that unrest which men miscall delight', and his acquiescence, arising out of immemorial custom or the caste system, in a fatalistic direction of his activities, which at least avoided the 'strange disease of modern life, with its sick hurry, its divided aims'.

This impression was made by the habits not only of the Indians themselves but also of those Europeans who had their temporary home there. It first took shape during the voyage eastwards. One felt, almost guiltily, as though he had been transferred back out of the surroundings to which he properly belonged into a more primitive past. Swarthy menials pulled hand-punkahs over the heads of passengers

seated at meals. Since there were no means of cooling the cabins, willing hands dragged the mattresses on to the deck, and there one slept in the night breeze and woke when dawn o'er-stepped the horizon. The sense of guilt was tempered by a feeling of relief that existence was contracting towards essentials and that much of the unnecessary frillings were being shorn away.

The oldest P. and O. vessel by which I have travelled was the *Shannon*. She had an odd way of giving a violent roll for no apparent reason. Once when I was dressing for dinner she did this, and the open port-hole of my cabin went under water with embarrassing results. Once again, just when the tables were laid for lunch, the whole of the crockery was broken by one of these lurches; for it was quite calm and the fiddles had not been put out. A peculiar feature of that ship was the Captain's cabin. It was on the promenade deck and had two doors, one on the port side, the other on the starboard. Each door was provided with a little porch, which gave some protection but not enough to prevent the contents of the cabin being blown about if the windward door were opened in blustery weather. The Captain was a very tall man with a face full of humour and a fund of good yarns. 'On a recent voyage,' he told us, 'we had on board two spinster ladies of a certain, or more properly of an uncertain, age. A stiff breeze arose. One of the ladies (let's call her Miss A.), seeing that the only habitable spot on deck was my porch on the leeward side, tied her deck-chair in it with a bit of rope. I hadn't the heart to disturb her, though every time I entered by the windward door the cabin was swept into chaos. But Miss B. envied Miss A. her sheltered nook, hurried up early from lunch, removed Miss A.'s chair and tied her own in its place. So, when Miss A. arrived, there was Miss B. comfortably tucked up in the porch she had usurped. Of course there was a row and they both appealed to me to

settle the difference. I told them the case was too intricate to be decided on its merits and that therefore I must give my verdict in favour of the elder of the two, whichever that was. That worked all right, and the place was never occupied again.'

Equally primitive were the arrangements for landing. The passengers were crowded at an unearthly hour of the morning on to a tender, which conveyed them to the quay. There a scramble took place for ramshackle cabs, the horses of which wore topees to protect them from the sun, and the padding inside seemed to be a store-house of bottled-up heat and smells. The hotel was a fragile-looking structure, mainly consisting of verandas and nodding perilously above the street. We were told that when the lift broke down the hotel cockroaches carried one upstairs.

But things which to-day would seem tiresome were then regarded as quite natural and accepted with a frolic welcome. And oh, the wonder of that first sight of the Orient! Dazzlingly vivid lights, sudden glooms; blossom-laden trees, poinsettias flaunting brilliance of green and red, croton and caladium of incredible dimensions; and a marvellous crowd glowing in the sunshine—women in rainbow wrappings; men in flashing white and turbans or bright caps adorned with golden kincobs; blue-clad policemen and yellow-clad porters; Arabs with snowy hoods cinctured round their brows; pedlars of glinting brassware and shimmering silk; hawkers of mangoes and deep-red plantains; soothsayers, astrologers, snake-charmers—all the strange medley of the East.

That is Bombay. But away, beyond the fantastic mountains that beckon us onwards, what further wealth of beauty and romance! There is the south, where mystery and menace still breathe from the inmost shrines of giant temples. To the far east are the mighty rivers of Bengal,

their banks fringed with lordly coco-palms swaying in the moist breeze they love, with prim areca-palms like the Noah's Ark trees of our childhood; all—river, banks and trees—draped, morning and eve, in soft amber glow. The hills and deserts and castle-crowned rocks of Rajputana are alive with memories of heroism and tragedy. The fortress of Agra, gem-encrusted within, towers proudly over the Jumna, and the river seems to pause in reverent awe beside the dreaming purity of the Taj Mahal. The magnificence of Delhi rises out of a plain strewn with the desolate palaces of vanished kings and counsellors. Fierce tribesmen throng the streets of Peshawar, and the city walls gaze on grim hills that hold a tale of blood and suffering. The iris clothes like grass the fields and roofs and grave-yards of Kashmir; the gardens and summer-houses of the Great Mughal slumber in the midst of a guardian circle of everlasting snow. No lapse of years can stale India's infinite variety, nor can length of time fathom her absorbing riddles. When for the last time I saw the Colaba light fade behind me in the scud of the monsoon, I felt that I was leaving a land whose glories I had not fully savoured, whose secrets I had not half fathomed.

But these marvels lay in the future. The first thing to do was to acclimatize one's self to the ways of an up-country station. Here again pleasant simplicity and unconventionality were the rule. Nobody minded if your dwelling was of sun-dried bricks (which means mud) covered over with a roof of untidy thatch, your ceiling-cloth scampered across by rats and other beasts, and your furniture of the shabbiest wickerwork. More was not expected and everyone was kind and helpful. Things were used and enjoyed largely in common. The custom had only recently ceased of taking your own knives, forks and spoons when you went out to dinner. But you still took your own servant, to help your hostess' staff generally and to look after your-

self in particular; and, if anyone was in need of cutlery or crockery for a party, it was deemed quite in order for his or her servants to borrow from a neighbour's servants without any reference to the masters. Similarly, if your neighbour wanted flowers for decoration, you viewed without concern his or her gardener rifling your beds. Your door was always open, literally and metaphorically, to all comers—including the fowls of the air and the beasts of the forest. Sparrows and hoopoes would visit the veranda where you were having *chhota hazri* to pick up the crumbs under the table. Bolder still, a crow would perch for a moment on the table itself when you weren't looking and make off with a piece of toast. Grey squirrels practised gymnastics up and down the punkah ropes. A praying mantis would make his home for days on the dressing-table and become quite a friend, while lizards bivouacked behind your pictures. Not all the visitors were so harmless and sociable as these. I should be sorry to say, lest I be thought to exaggerate, how many scorpions and black kraits I have killed in the house. And the krait is a more dangerous snake than the cobra. Indeed, I have come across persons in Indian villages who had recently been bitten by the cobra and had recovered without medical aid, the only visible effect being a swelling of the limbs. It all depends upon how much venom the cobra manages to inject into the body. But woe betide the victim of a krait. Even a panther may find his way into your house; for the panther is an inquisitive beast. An instance of this happened at a house (in a large station) next but one to that where I was living. The panther entered by night and took up his quarters in a small windowless store-room opening into the hall. The servants saw it in the morning, shut the store-room door and reported to the Sahib, a Major in the Sappers. His plan of battle was a frontal attack by himself and an ambush by his wife, who



was useful with a rifle, in case the enemy eluded the frontal attack. The Major threw open the store-room door and had a shot at the panther dimly seen in the semi-darkness. The panther, wounded but by no means disabled, rushed past him through the hall and out at the front door, at one side of which the lady marksman was concealed against the outer wall. She let fly as the creature bounded past, but missed. The panther was so ill advised as to seek cover in a disused stable, where he was dispatched. Had he made for the open country he might have escaped. But panthers are apt to neutralize their own nimbleness by lack of judgement. I was once a guest at a Christmas camp, when a party of three set out in the morning to stalk swamp-deer over a great glade of high grass, in brushing through which they nearly trod on a panther. The animal could easily have eluded them by diving into the grass, instead of which he sought safety by running up the one and only tree that was near by, thus exposing himself as a sitting target to the rifle.

A like simplicity entered into the commonplace business of life. My monthly pay was brought to me from the local treasury in the form of rupees in a stout bag. There was no European bank in the place. So, when I had to remit large sums of money to a public institution elsewhere, I used to drive into the bazaar with a sackful of coins and notes under the seat of my trap and pay a call on the biggest of the local money-lenders—so big that he lived in a sort of ramshackle palace and had acquired the honorary title of Raja. I am shown, sack and all, into his garden, a large lawn surrounded with blossoming shrubs, a fountain playing in the middle, and peafowl lazily strutting about. A superior henchman of the financier receives me, places two chairs, in one of which I am invited to sit, and entertains me with *pan supari* and polite conversation while the great man is summoned.

Presently there is a bustling and a whispering among the attendants. The great man appears, salaams profoundly and diffidently seats himself in the other chair. It would be untactful to start away on business as the chief motive of the visit, though the motive is tacitly understood. So we exchange the usual elaborate greetings in the hyperbole of Hindustani—for the great man knows no English. Then general topics, such as the weather, crop prospects, the probability of epidemic disease in the city; and I make inquiry about the Raja's stables, a favourite subject; for, though he wouldn't dream of mounting a horse, he likes fine pairs for his fine carriages. Meantime the fountain plays, the peafowl wander round and peck at the sack of money, and time slips away. Then at last the question comes—Is there any service which the Sahib wishes done? I reply that there is a trifling matter, a little money to be remitted. The great man beckons an attendant, who removes the sack without counting coin or notes. That doesn't matter; I know it will be all right. More compliments and talk. The attendant reappears with the sack—now empty. We ignore him and continue the leisurely talk, till the Raja asks in feigned surprise, as though he had forgotten all about it, whether we hadn't some small business to do. Ah yes; here it is. He takes a tiny scrap of paper from the attendant and hands it to me. All it contains are a few hieroglyphics in the obscure Marwari script. This I pocket with ostentatious negligence, well knowing that in a few days I shall receive an acknowledgment from the British bank in the capital of a neighbouring province.

The one thing that didn't seem simple in that Indian scheme of life was the multitude of servants one had to employ. Each did so little. But he did that little well. Properly treated, your Indian servants are an immense comfort. They will become devoted to you; and, when

you leave the country, the parting with them will be a terrible and tearful wrench. Some people make the error of trying to deal with them in accordance with European standards, forgetting that the East has its own methods and code of morality. There are, for instance, excellent and conscientious housewives who cannot tolerate the idea that the head servant is taking commissions. But commissions are a custom of the country; and the Memsahib who fights against that custom will alienate her staff and in the end pay a higher price for goods than if she had quietly connived in what is regarded as perfectly honest. As to the honesty, I had an amusing example of it in my early days. Some friends of mine were doing a tour in India and came to stay with me. One evening, on returning from office, I found them seated in the veranda admiring a display of brass, silks, and silver spread out on the floor by a merchant. They asked my advice; and I told them what you paid for silver by weight and what should be added for workmanship. But the boxwallah proposed tossing for top or bottom prices; and my friends, to whom money was no great object, agreed, though I warned them that, from the merchant's point of view, it would be heads I win and tails I don't lose—a warning which he, in ignorance of English, appears to have thought was an encouragement to gamble. The purchasers got the pieces of silk and of silver that they wanted, some at top, some at alleged bottom, prices; and they were quite satisfied. Next morning my bearer came into my study and placed five rupees on the table. I pointed out that this was a reversal of our usual monetary transactions. He explained that the rupees were my commission given by the merchant because I had urged my friends to toss for the price. I made the bearer happy by bestowing the rupees on him and amused my friends at breakfast by telling them how I had been rewarded for lightening their purses.

The sociability of an Indian station is increased by the club, which, where the British community is sufficiently large, will generally have a polo-ground, lawn-tennis courts, and perhaps a racket-court adjoining. In the opinion of some, the club, with its cards, billiards, short drinks, and gossip, was disruptive of home life and domesticity. As a shocking example the story was told of a judge in Madras, who was playing whist in the club while his wife was engaged upon an important family event. Suddenly the judge's bearer burst unceremoniously and jubilantly into the card-room and announced: 'Sahib, Memsahib got one baby.' His friends congratulated the judge on the addition to his family, and the game was resumed. The players were scanning their hands when the bearer reappeared in a state of great excitement. 'Sahib, Memsahib got other baby.' 'Good God!' cried the judge, as he flung his cards on the table, 'I must go and put a stop to this at once.' Yet it may be argued that the judge was better at his club and out of the way during a crisis of this sort. And I was assured by the judge's nephew<sup>1</sup> (a distinguished scholar and author, who also vouched for the truth of the story) that his uncle was a man of humane and exemplary character, respected and beloved by all with whom he came in contact.

A juster criticism of the club arises from its twofold effect on the relations between European and Indian. In the first place, it has tended to make of the former a self-contained and rather isolated community. The Briton meets the Indian in the office, in the law courts, in business premises; but social contacts, which would produce much mutual understanding, are often slight and formal. In the second place, Indians resent being excluded from

<sup>1</sup> By a strange coincidence I read the report of my friend the nephew's death in *The Times* the morning after the day on which I had penned these lines.

European clubs. This doesn't mean that they are totally excluded. Some clubs open their doors to Indians of good social standing; and there are special clubs, like the Calcutta Club and the Willingdon Club at Bombay, for entry into which Indians are just as eligible as Europeans. But the fact remains that the membership of clubs is mainly European; and this produces a regrettable cleavage.

Of course Europeans allege reasons, some fanciful, some real, for the exclusion of Indians. And there are Indians who can laugh at the fanciful, and appreciate, though they may not approve, the real reasons. There is a story told of that most human and humorous ruler, the late Maharaja of Gwalior. Returning from a visit to England, he found that he had to wait about in Bombay till the evening train. Now the Maharaja was fond of putting on the commonest clothes and wandering about and mixing with people incognito, in the style of Haroun al Raschid—a habit which laid a wholesome restraint on any of his officials who were inclined to oppressive measures. So he had recourse to this form of entertainment and toured unattended through the streets of Bombay, making little purchases and chatting with the shopkeepers. In the course of his peregrinations he came across a building labelled Turkish Baths. It was a stuffy day, and he thought a bath would freshen him up. But he was checked by the doorkeeper, a seedy-looking white of low-born speech, who informed him that Indians were not admitted. Instead of showing annoyance, the Maharaja entered into conversation with the unsavoury janitor, who was so much entranced by his talk that he finally made the following suggestion. 'Look 'ere, you ain't a bad sort of Babu. Now I'll tell you what. You'll find a shop just round the corner. There you buy a straw 'at, and I'll let you in as a Eurasian.'<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja did as he was bidden and is

<sup>1</sup> The word 'Eurasians' used to be applied to those of mixed descent. They

said to have rejoiced afterwards in telling the story against himself. But very different would have been the reaction of an Indian whose position did not, as did that of the Maharaja, secure him an entry into any grade of society.

Kindliness, unostentatious hospitality, and the amenities of a club made life in the station pleasant enough. Of course the climate was trying in May and June. But one could run up for a few days to the neighbouring hill-station of Pachmarhi—not high enough for real coolness but at least more tolerable than the plains. Pachmarhi stands on a plateau of about thirty-seven square miles in area, supported, like a table on its legs, by ridges and peaks, which are themselves cleft by deep canyons. The plateau, much like an English park in appearance, is well timbered and, curiously enough, is covered during the monsoon with a growth of splendid mushrooms. The views down some of the canyons are magnificent. This is part of the Satpura range, a line of low hills and uplands clothed here and there with forest. The hills round Pachmarhi are the highest points. They are described in Forsyth's well-known book on the Highlands of central India. Immediately to the east is the district of Seonee, made famous by Kipling's *Jungle Book*. Yet farther east is the district which I shall presently describe as the scene of my work during the famine of 1897 and of shooting trips which I soon discovered were a more satisfying way of spending a week's holiday during the heat than participation in the more civilized pleasures of Pachmarhi. The first time I met Kipling I was introduced as coming from India. He sat up at once and asked me from what part. I said I was one of the Seonee pack but that my favourite haunts

thought it derogatory; and, as a salve to their feelings, they were officially denominated 'Members of the Domiciled Community'. So appalling an expression could not long survive; and they are now happy under the title of 'Anglo-Indians'—a term which used to describe Britons who had long lived in India.

were a little east of Seonee, in forests even more remote where the jungle law was even more scrupulously observed; and we continued with reminiscences and forecasts for the best part of an hour.

I look back on those camping days with yearning. How delightful was the first morning, when one set out, leaving the familiar station and office drudgery and plunging into the unknown! That day the route probably ran along one of the trunk roads. What excitement as my pack of terriers pursued a bevy of monkeys down the track, till the monkeys took refuge in the trees bordering the road and mocked the dogs' attempts to climb! And the wayfarers are a constant source of interest. There are bullock-carts carrying brightly clad families to fair or market or shrine. Or we meet the lordly camel-bus—an imposing structure of two stories drawn by one or more supercilious-looking creatures. But I suppose the camel-cart has by now been reformed out of existence and the motor has usurped its place. Then we branch off on field-paths that lead to remote villages. There are sheets of water denizenized by wild duck and stretches of swamp over which we may hear the drumming of a snipe. Peasants are about their work. Statuesque women are drawing water from the wells. Strange figures now and then encounter us—a group of men each couple of whom bear on their shoulders the end of a pole, and from the pole are suspended pots holding water from holy Ganges. The men are hurrying as though some wealthy person were in urgent need of the purifying element. And all around nature and man seem to have awakened after the deadening heats and the depressing rains and to be stirred to new vigour by the freshness of the clear air. Over all glows a brilliant sky, swept clean by the recent monsoon. Light mists of morning hang above marsh and river. Young crops fledge the fields with delicate green. On quiet pools float lotus blooms of



*Indian Women drawing Water*





white and pink. Between fresh-foliaged trees sweep flocks of bright parrots, winnowing the air with wings of emerald. On the horizon forest-clad hills beckon us to the mystery of their recesses. All things are rejoicing together in new-born beauty and strength. Often in such a scene the words have rung in my head: 'For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.'

### *Chapter III*

#### SMALL GAME SHOOTING

IF camping is prolonged and takes you far afield supplies of food cannot be got from the station. The best plan for milk and butter is to keep a buffalo in camp. It is also wise to devote half a camel-load to the transport of fowls—not for the eating of the fowls but for their eggs. As for bread, in earlier days I contented myself with chupatties, which, if some raising powder is added, are quite good. Later on, when I felt that my pay would run to a bread-making cook, who demands higher wages because of the toil of kneading, I had my own bread made, using a larger proportion of local flour, stone-ground and rough, than of fine milled flour; and that gives an excellent mixture. Meat is practically unobtainable in the villages; and to carry about a flock of sheep is apt to be a nuisance. So one shot birds and beasts and lived on game. There were plenty of duck and snipe to be had, and antelopes also—enough to feed one's self and the servants. The servants especially appreciated antelope; the venison strengthened them for the sustained exertions of camp life.

In talking of the wild sports to be had in India I shall confine myself to shooting. For during the time when I had most leisure for sport I was in good shooting country—both small and big game. Moreover, I had always been fond of shooting, ever since my father presented me with his old pin-fire gun. He said it was a good weapon to begin with, because you could always see when it was loaded. When I pointed out that the barrels were burst and that I could see smoke pouring out of the holes in them (it was the day of black powder), he replied: 'Of course the gun's burst. It burst long ago, but it won't

burst any more. They're good wire barrels.' And the old gun did quite well.

Shooting in India has advantages of its own. It is inexpensive; so one can enjoy it while he is still young and on small pay and physically capable of making the most of it. There are no limits, no marches—the world is all before you. You can wander where you will, and none can stop you; for there are no game laws nor, except in government forests, any restrictions. In small game shooting there is none of the artificiality that robs sport in the British Isles of some of its charm. There is no laying down of pheasants, there are no elaborate drives, no instructions from the keeper as to where exactly you are to stand. In India you go for anything that may be on the ground, you generally walk the game up and you do the planning yourself. Also, the game you may meet is interestingly varied. There are of course days when you are concentrating on snipe or duck. But even on those days you have surprises, as happened to a friend of mine who was shooting a snipe swamp, when the villagers ran up to say that a tiger had moved into a strip of neighbouring jungle; whereupon my friend got his rifle, shot the tiger and then resumed his sport among the snipe. But very often you are out simply for a mixed bag. And how pleasant is variety! Here at home does not the sportsman's pulse quicken when, during a pheasant-drive, he finds his stand deep in the covert at some secluded spot where osiers rise from moist ground and he recognizes a likely lurking-place for a woodcock? And is there not a peculiar fascination, when walking up grouse, in flushing a snipe or a teal? In my early days in India, before motor-cars were introduced, I would drive out on a holiday with two friends in a roomy dog-cart of which I was the proud possessor, starting at 4.30 a.m. and covering fifteen to twenty-five miles with a relay of horses. We usually began at a piece of water

where we could count on getting duck and, as the day warmed, snipe. When we had finished with the duck and snipe we opened our hamper and had breakfast, after which we cut a large circle across country, taking in other small sheets of water and swamp as well as dry ground. The sun having set, we started for home, the dog-cart loaded with game—duck, teal, and snipe, partridges both grey and painted, sand-grouse, quail, and hares, maybe a peafowl or a wild goose or some rock-pigeons startled by throwing stones down a disused well, and possibly an antelope. Finally, one great advantage of sport in India was that, if you had much camping to do it could be enjoyed as a concomitant to your work, and, as I have already said, in some districts, where no meat was obtainable unless you chose to drag about a flock of sheep or a regular farmyard of fowls, it was almost a necessity for yourself and your servants. Each day one was on new ground; and there was generally something to be shot close at hand, so that an hour and a half's stroll in the evening would keep the larder stocked.

Among ducks and their allies, the gadwall was the commonest true duck in the Central Provinces. Pintails were numerous; so were spot-bills, common pochards, red-crested pochards, common teal, and garganeys. There were also comb-ducks, lesser whistling teal, and cotton teal, all of which belie their names and are regarded as unfit for food, though the last-named, if he has had good feeding, is really excellent, and the whistling teal (which roosts at night, and often builds its nest, in trees) makes quite good soup.

People allow themselves to be guided by an adverse opinion they have heard and turn up their noses at things which are really quite eatable but have somehow contracted a bad reputation. I once started into camp in a part of the country which was new to me. In the evening

I went out to hunt for dinner. There was water, but never a duck or a snipe to be seen, with the exception of the ubiquitous whistling teal. I was training a dog to retrieve in water and shot several whistlers to give him practice in bringing in birds. On returning to camp I saw that during my absence another tent had arrived and was being pitched. I strolled over to make acquaintance with the newcomer and asked him to dinner. He gladly accepted; for his carts and kit were all behind. When I warned my cook that there would be a guest for dinner, he objected that there was no meat. (In such circumstances I used to dine off field-pulse, which contains protein and, if fried in butter, makes quite an appetizing dish.) So I told him to cut up and cook the whistlers. Presently my guest arrived and, while we waited for dinner, began to lament the absence of game in the neighbourhood and the difficulty of getting meat. 'There are no duck,' he said, 'only those horrible whistlers. They're unfit for food. If I swallow a morsel of whistler I'm at once violently sick.' I shuddered, thinking of the *pièce de résistance* at our forthcoming meal. I could only carry on and hope for the best. We had vegetable soup and then came the portions of the fatal fowls. As he started on a helping I watched with apprehension for any inauspicious symptoms. To my relief he ate with obvious enjoyment and asked for a second helping. 'That's a delicious duck,' he exclaimed, 'but I can't think how you came across duck here.' Feeling it still indiscreet to divulge the nature of the dish, I gave an evasive reply.

Feeding has a lot to do with the flavour of different kinds of duck. Thus, I found the pochards, elsewhere esteemed as food, uneatable in India. On the other hand, the spot-bill, a large, rather coarse-looking bird which breeds in India, is tender and delicious. The country was overrun with ruddy sheldrakes. No one dreams of shooting

this bird; for he is regarded as unfit for food, and his local name (Brahminy duck) probably acts as a protection. But he is a great nuisance; he stands on the edge of duck-haunted pools, where, if he were normally minded, he would be lying down or swimming in the water, and, as you are warily approaching, gives warning with his cry, from the sound of which comes his other local name of *chukki-chuckwa*. I seldom saw a mallard in the Central Provinces; and I never, to my knowledge, saw a widgeon in India, though widgeon are commonly found in many areas during the cold weather.

Among other birds in the Central Provinces there was the progenitor of the barndoor fowl. He is there represented by three species—the common jungle-fowl, much like our bantam cock, the spur-fowl and the silver jungle-fowl (*Gallus sonnerati*). This last, when in full plumage, is one of the handsomest birds I have ever seen, with silver, black-mottled breast and finely arching blue tail, the end of the tail sweeping the ground. I believe he is properly an inhabitant of southern India; but he is quite common in the forests of the Hoshangabad and adjoining districts. Sometimes during a beat for tiger whole farm-yards of the common jungle-fowl would walk in procession before you; and, if no tiger materialized, the beaters would be sent back to drive them out. Then they would come over you like the wind and, in the narrow fire-cuts of the forest, offered tricky shots. Peafowl, too, were turned out in the beats. Although the cultivators in the Central Provinces are Hindus, to whom the peafowl is sacred, there was no prohibition, as there is in the Punjab where the cultivators are largely Muslims, against shooting this bird. Indeed, the cultivators were very ready to help in the destruction of so serious a marauder of their crops.

For a time I was in the eastern portion of the Central Provinces, which then included the district of Sambalpur,

now part of Orissa. Sambalpur offered great opportunities for sport; but, travelling rapidly and with long marches, as work compelled me to do, I had no time to indulge in jungle shooting. The wildfowling, however, was splendid. The only trouble was that there were so many sheets of water that several guns were wanted, so that the birds could be driven from one sheet to another; and I was alone in camp. A characteristic of this country is the enormous number of cranes which congregate in it. The grey or edible crane (*Grus cinerea*), which migrates into India at the beginning of the cold weather, is found commonly throughout the Central Provinces, Rajputana, and elsewhere. The rivers of Sambalpur seem to be particularly attractive to this bird, especially the Mahanadi and the Hasdo rivers. (The latter river, by the way, is, like some other streams of this district, full of shifting quick-sands, which often form overnight in the recognized fords. Sometimes, in a single morning's march, when I had to make several crossings, my horse has plunged down to the saddle and with difficulty scrambled out, and I have arrived at my destination wet through.) Regularly about 11 a.m. thousands of cranes would rise from the Mahanadi to go seek their food in the fields, and, at the sound of their cries, the European inhabitants of Sambalpur town would rush out from their houses with .303's and fire vainly at the ranks of birds already hundreds of yards up in the sky. This crane, when rising, gives the sportsman no chance; he spirals up till he has reached an elevation where he is safe. Indeed, he is one of the most difficult birds to shoot; and yet he needs destroying, for he is a great devourer of crops, especially of field-peas. A whole regiment of cranes will settle down in a field, form a straight line across it and steadily eat their way from one end to the other. Their discipline is remarkable; sentinels stand at intervals, while the other birds gobble away with heads buried in



the thick crop. When a sentinel has done his turn of duty, down goes his head and he starts gobbling, and at the same moment up goes the head of his next-door neighbour, who remains on guard till he too is relieved. I have sometimes watched this game going on for half an hour in hope of getting a shot. But the least movement would give me away to the sentinels, and then the whole regiment would circle upwards till far out of range. A man who had shot many tigers once told me that he would rather shoot a grey crane than another half-dozen tigers and that, though he had spent days trying to circumvent this wily fowl, he had never got one. I myself did once manage to bag one by a piece of good luck. Cranes of another species, also common in those parts, are not so unapproachable, because they feed in smaller flocks. This is the beautiful demoiselle crane (*Anthropoides virgo*), with black crest, black hanging feathers on his throat, and white pheasant's eyes. At one time there were some specimens of this crane in St. James's Park. Both these cranes, the grey and the demoiselle, are excellent food; their dark flesh is rather like tender beef.

When I left the Central Provinces I did no shooting for some years; for, though there is plenty of game (including rhinoceros) in Assam and in parts of Bengal, I was much too busy to indulge in any sport. But I saw some interesting things. Just after sunrise one morning in early April I bundled out of the train at a station in the Surma Valley (the southern part of Assam) and started riding to a place about twelve miles distant where I had a day's work to do. I was suddenly aware of a snipe, its bill tucked under a wing, lying asleep by the side of the road. Now one knows how rare it is to see a snipe on the ground; one generally learns of his presence only when he is flushed. But behold! here was not only one snipe but a whole row of snipe, and another row on the other side. I brought the horse close up to the snipe; they didn't stir, they were dead to the

world. Then the reason dawned on me. During the end of March and the first days of April the snipe in Madras begin their migration northwards and in the course of the journey fly across the Bay of Bengal—a long and perilous flight, in which, no doubt, many succumb and fall into the sea. This accounts for the fact that in early April snipe in Assam are notably numerous, the birds having to remain there a while to recover from fatigue. These snipe I saw must have traversed the Bay the preceding night and had just alighted so weary that they took no thought for concealment and only wanted to sleep. I am sure that I could have dismounted and filled my pockets with snipe; but I felt it would be mean to take such an advantage of their plight.

One evening when I was touring in northern Assam, not far from the foot of the outliers of the Himalaya, I was surprised to see what looked like lines of cloud advancing from the hills over the plain. It was brilliantly clear weather, and clouds had really no business to be there. As they neared me they proved to be not clouds but serried ranks of duck, one rank behind the other, stretching from horizon to horizon. There must have been millions of them. Though they flew at a great height, they were just distinguishable as duck. The noise of pulsing wings was loud as they passed over me. It was part of the great migration into India which takes place at the beginning of each cold season, when one hears with joy the nightly honking of geese and the mysterious cry of cranes as they fly southward from their resorts in the far north.

In earlier days, when I was generally alone in camp and shooting mainly for the pot, I kept no records. But there stand out in memory a few lucky shots which fell to my lot while I was in the Central Provinces. One such occurred when a friend had joined me in camp to have a day or two of shooting. We were camped on the edge of

a lake surrounded by forest-clad hills. My friend set out in a sort of catamaran—a couple of native canoes or ‘dug-outs’ joined together with cross-pieces of timber which formed a seat. I heard him banging away at the duck and teal, and, in the evening when my work was finished, I strolled out along the margin of the lake to its shallow end, waded out into the water and concealed myself in a clump of reeds. As the sun sank five gadwall, formed in echelon, flew over me within shot. I aimed ahead of the foremost bird. At that moment the flock made a sudden change of formation, straightening the oblique line. The result was that, to my surprise, four birds fell dead. As I waded out farther to gather them, my friend in the canoe called out: ‘A wonderful shot! Five duck with one barrel.’ ‘No, four,’ I shouted back. ‘I’ve picked up the fifth,’ he answered. ‘It fell dead just in front of me.’ The responsibility for this wholesale massacre rested not on me but on the birds themselves, who had neatly executed a military movement at an unfortunate moment.

But I was once the innocent agent of an unpremeditated slaughter even more extensive and more fortuitous than that of the ducks. I strolled out one evening with my gun in search of dinner. There was no water handy nor was there any other sign of game about. So I just walked along in the hope of something turning up. I struck into a narrow glade which, whether or no it was likely to provide sport, was so attractive that I continued to explore it. Then green pigeons began to fly, one by one, out of the trees on either side. The green pigeon (*Crocopus phoenicopterus*) is, I may remark, not a pigeon at all; it is a bird of green and yellow plumage, swift of flight, gifted with a soft whistling note, and deemed, though in my opinion without good cause, to be a delicacy. I did not fire at them; for they were all out of range. They flew off and disappeared at the far end of the glade, where stood a

noble tamarind tree clad in thick black foliage. Finally a single green pigeon flew out within range. I shot it, gathered it, and should have gone back to my tent with this inadequate provision but that my curiosity was aroused by a tremor in the leaves of the tamarind. Stepping forward to find the cause, I discovered nine green pigeons, still warm, lying dead beneath the tree. They must have been the birds that had disappeared up the glade. They had evidently clustered together, after their wont, under the dense foliage. When I bagged the single bird the shot had carried on and happened to strike the cluster. So, at the cost of one cartridge, I got ten birds and returned to camp with the makings of a pigeon pie.

## Chapter IV

### FAMINE

IT has sometimes been maliciously stated that the British introduced famine into India. As a matter of fact neither the British nor anyone else could change the habits or regulate the vagaries of the monsoon. And it is those vagaries, generally resulting in too little rain but at other times causing floods, that from time immemorial have brought about crop failures and famines. (An obvious exception was the Bengal famine of 1943, for which causes other than the monsoon were mainly responsible.) Let us consider what happened in two of the major famines of which we have knowledge. In the fourteenth century upper India was afflicted with droughts for the space of seven years, and whole districts and towns became depopulated. The monarch who then ruled at Delhi was Sultan Muhammad Shah Tughlaq, a man of vision but also of imperfect judgement and of eccentric and violent temper. His vision led him wisely to distribute among the suffering peasants seed-grain and cattle to enable them to raise a future crop. His judgement failed to remind him that man cannot live on hope alone. And when the starving villagers staved off death by eating the seed-grain his temper provoked him to punish 'the miserable transgressors with such rigour that the tale of executions shocked and disgusted even those accustomed to his barbarous severity, and this measure of relief produced more misery than would have resulted from a policy of inaction.'<sup>1</sup> The second case also resulted in a disaster—this time under the British Government, which had taken over complete control from the Com-

<sup>1</sup> *The Cambridge History of India*, vol. iii, p. 153.

pany eight years before. In 1866 Orissa was still isolated from the rest of India on the landward side and was approachable only by sea. It was a fertile rice-growing country, and the inhabitants used to export at high prices all the grain not necessary for their immediate needs. So, the previous year's monsoon having proved a total failure, they were left foodless, and food could be brought to them only by sea. An ample supply was loaded on ships for their relief. But the ships started too late and were caught by the monsoon off a coast where port facilities were inadequate and cargoes could not be landed in rough weather. The grain was unloaded only after the monsoon had ceased, and it was then useless; for those whom it might have succoured were already dead, and so heavy was that year's crop that much of what had been imported was left rotting on the wharves.

The government devised various means of coping with the periodic crop failures. Their efforts were at first only partially successful and were sometimes accompanied by wasteful expenditure of money. But the opening up of the country by roads and railways, combined with the growing use of coin as a medium of transaction among the peasants, eased the situation. Immense irrigation works were also undertaken. And a Famine Code was compiled for the guidance of officers. The three principal weapons advocated in the code are works (large or local) for the able-bodied, house-to-house relief where such works cannot be started and for those unable to do manual toil, and kitchens for the children, the aged and the decrepit.

During my first six years in India several monsoons failed lamentably. Famine conditions were declared in 1897 and again in 1899. In each of these years I was sent as a Famine Relief Officer to districts which were particularly hard hit and where the work was abnormally difficult. In neither district was there any railway;

indeed the nearest railway station was far from the district border. In both of them the roads were few and bad. And both were largely inhabited by aboriginal tribes—Baigas, Gonds, and Kurkus, who are shy and unamenable to discipline and prefer to perish comfortably in the jungle rather than to seek organized relief. To that extent the two districts were similar. But in most other respects that to which I was assigned in 1897 was far the more difficult. Here the country was wilder; the aborigines formed much the greater proportion of the population; the population itself was sparser (and it has been truly said that the difficulty of famine relief varies in inverse ratio to the density of the population); and the area was a hot-bed of cholera and malaria. In only two respects was work in the other district more complicated. One was the supply of grain, which will be mentioned later. The other was a water famine on top of the food famine. I had to take with me a band of Indians acquainted with methods of blasting, and also a store of explosives. The wells presented a depressing sight—a mass of frogs sustaining existence in the few cupfuls of water which remained at the bottom; and the rock was black basalt. Nevertheless, thanks to patient blasting and the discovery of forgotten water-sources which could be reached by digging, only one out of many hundreds of villages had to be vacated for lack of water. It is to the former of these districts that the following remarks specially apply.

The work of a famine relief officer is to superintend<sup>1</sup> (with professional assistance in technical matters) large relief works and himself to plan and initiate small local works; to see that house-to-house relief is sufficiently extended and reaches its proper recipients; and to open

<sup>1</sup> Large works were subsequently put wholly in the charge of the Public Works Department.

kitchens and ensure their orderly maintenance. These are his main duties; but there are many additional responsibilities, such as the supply of grain and the distribution of the Mansion House Fund, which is made up of contributions given by well-wishers in the British Empire, the United States of America, and other countries. In all these matters he has to keep his eye open against speculation; for speculation is easy when a temporary staff has to be scraped together to meet an emergency.

This danger was prevalent on the large road works, where the gangs were dispersed over a length of five or more miles, where absences due to illness were natural (and naturally exaggerated), and where sudden epidemics were apt to cause disorganization—on several occasions I had to interrupt my other duties and dash off on receiving an SOS from a works manager begging me to come and form a cholera camp for infected gangs. Only close questioning of the members of a gang (and it was difficult to extract information from these shy folk) could discover the easy fraud of false entries on the roll. When at last that device had been so often countered that it became too risky, the expedient of the 'phantom gang' was invented. Gang No. 20 isn't on the road. Where is it? 'Oh, gang No. 20 is getting metal over there.' 'Over there' is an outcrop of rock some two miles away. There is no road to it—just a weary waste of boulders and gullies which must be ridden over at a walk. Much else has to be done, the water-supplies and the hospital visited and the accounts checked; and it is horrid hot midday. But the proximity of good rock, which might have been, but is not being, used for the getting of metal and would have entailed a much shorter lead, rouses suspicion. The time spent on the journey may be worth while. And it is; for there is no sign of gang No. 20 or of any quarrying on the outcrop. And yet the pay-sheets show that the



money due to the thirty workers in the gang has been regularly drawn—by someone! A third dodge was to withhold a small part of the daily wage. This was easy to do in the case of these primitive people but was also easy to detect. All that was necessary was to make what the Indian calls a 'surprised visit' to the huts of the workers on a pay-day just after the time when the wages had been distributed and to ask the recipients to produce the coins from what served them as pockets.

The house-to-house relief was distributed by the patwaris<sup>1</sup> (village accountants) working under the Revenue Inspectors. The existence of this permanent staff was an immense advantage; and my own experience was that the humble patwari, poorly paid as he was, performed this duty with absolute honesty. This may have been in some cases due to the knowledge that the distribution was being vigilantly watched. But I think that the fact that he is a government servant (often holding a hereditary office) and that the money with which he was dealing was government money had much to do with the admirable manner in which, despite strong temptation, the patwari discharged this onerous function. The relief officer's task was to check the bills periodically sent in by the Revenue Inspectors, to provide these officers with coin, which they distributed to the patwaris and the patwaris disbursed in the villages, to whip round some hundreds of villages as fast as he could, calling over the roll of 'poors' kept in each village, comparing the number shown on that roll with the number entered in the bills, discovering by individual questions whether the fortnightly dole was regularly and fully received. This supervision of house-to-house relief occupied the greater part of his time. It demanded physical endurance and a close mastery of the vernacular, since all lists and

<sup>1</sup> The word is pronounced with the second 'a' long—patwāri.

accounts were kept in Sanskrit (Deva-Nagri) script and were often badly written, while the language itself was partly made up of local patois. (The Gonds have their own language but, except the old women, are generally bilingual to the extent of carrying on simple conversation in Hindi.) But the main difficulties were due to the habits of the people. They feared strangers, whether white or brown; and some had never seen a white man and fled on the approach of so unaccustomed a creature. They often deserted a village which had suffered from cholera or where their thriftless method of cultivation had rendered the land unproductive. Above all, it was their habit to desert their villages in the hot weather, bivouac in the jungle and eat the fruits which it offered—a wholesome enough diet in normal years when it could be supplemented with the small millets which formed their staple crop, but apt to have disastrous results when taken alone.

Here is one out of many instances of the sort of thing that happened. I sallied out from camp one afternoon to inspect an isolated village deep in the jungle. On reaching the spot indicated on the map as its site, I found nothing but the forest and its silence. I plugged on and fortunately met the patwari of a neighbouring group of villages, who assured me that the inhabitants had long before removed to a site three miles onward—at least, he said, that was where their village was a year ago. I ride forward three miles and, sure enough, there discover a village burnt-out and abandoned like a lodge in a garden of cucumbers. The only things which had survived intact were coffin-shaped grain-bins made of dried mud which rose among the ruins like melancholy symbols of desolation. On again through jungle and solitude. Suddenly I descry a furtive figure. The nervous Gond tries first to hide, then to flee. But I cut off his

retreat and, after calming his fears with some mild chaff and an assurance that I am neither a tiger nor a spook, I try to get information. He doesn't know much about it but thinks that cholera broke out and the people flitted to an uninfected water-source. Whither they have gone he cannot tell. I began to feel, as a Tommy expressed it years afterwards when floundering through Flanders mud towards an ever-receding destination, that I was 'at least keeping up with the blasted place'. But the day was now waning and I was compelled to give up the attempt to find that elusive village. Nor did I hunt it down till long afterwards, when I happened again to be in that neighbourhood. It was near the end of a long day during which I had been riding from village to village with a little retinue of men and camels carrying money-bags, seed-grain for the winter sowings, and new clothes to replace the worn-out wardrobes of the aboriginal ladies. Emerging from a stretch of forest, I beheld at the top of a gentle slope a collection of cottages, the usual timber uprights, walls of wattled bamboo and grass roofs, all looking suspiciously new. Convinced that I had tracked that village to its lair, I trotted off towards it—and it chanced that I was that day riding a white mare. I reached the village, dismounted and, tired after many hours in the saddle, sat down on a tree-stump. The place was utterly deserted; and yet it was not the season when the inhabitants would naturally migrate into the jungle. I lighted my pipe and cogitated. The rays of the declining sun shed a pleasant light over the peaceful scene; and I began to try to remember and repeat fragments of literature (a favourite pastime with me if I have to wait for a train on a wayside station by night or am otherwise unoccupied and alone). Passages came to the mind apposite to the occasion. Of course 'The Deserted Village'. Keats, too, chimed in quite nicely—

And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

My dream was suddenly broken by an apparition. Just in front of where I was seated there stood a cottage with a small annexe, which I judged to be a hen-pen, seeing that the opening into it was of a size to admit the domestic fowl. Something moved in the diminutive door and seemed to fill it up. This something resolved itself into a tiny face which was peering at me in perplexed wonderment. I clumsily essayed such primitive sounds of encouragement as are deemed appropriate for attracting the attention of the young and inspiring them with confidence. The face began to grin and twinkle. It emerged from the hole and, followed by its body, began to crawl towards me. Then, quite fearless, it climbed up on to my knees. Meantime a second face blocked the little door, and a second child crawled out and clambered up my legs. A third, a fourth, a whole crowd of them, emerging like ants from a hole. They perched themselves upon me and around me and commenced a gleeful chuckling. And then this chuckling was echoed by burbles of maturer mirth from roofs of houses, from branches of trees, from behind bushes and big clumps of grass; and out of these hiding-places appeared the inhabitants of the village. They had seen me approach and maybe had taken me on my white mare for Death on his pale horse. They had hastily stuffed the children into the hen-pen and had concealed themselves with that perfection that only forest folk can attain. The children had given them away, first by their inquisitiveness, then by their infectious laughter; and finally the confidence of the children had bred a like confidence in the parents. 'And a little child shall lead them.' At this moment the retinue arrived. Money, grain, and clothes were distributed, and

the belles of the village darted behind the bushes to don their new raiment.

A kitchen could best be organized where there was a police station or some minor official of the forest department to manage it. Elsewhere there was the difficulty of temporary and often unreliable staff. The food was *khichri* (hence our 'kedgeree'), made of rice and field peas with the addition of health-giving condiments in the shape of chillies and salt. In a large kitchen the manager could, by omitting the condiments, make quite a big sum of money. Sudden descents upon kitchens led to disclosures; and the stoppage of these frauds was hailed with delight by the villagers, who were too nervous of offending the managers to take the initiative in righting matters.

In the district where I worked in 1897 there was no great scope for kitchens. It would have been difficult to organize a large number of them; and the aborigines could be trusted to look after their own children. But there were a few whose parents had either died or wandered away; and regarding these a complication arose. The aborigines, being animists, were regarded by missionaries as a promising field for their labours. The missions established orphan homes and proposed to government that relief officers should be directed to send children whose parents could not be traced to be brought up in these homes. This would have put the children into trustworthy hands—I had made early acquaintance with the missionaries in this district and knew that they were doing heroic work under great handicaps—and would have given them education and a good start in life. On the other hand, the missionaries did not conceal their intention of bringing such children up as Christians; and the question arose whether the government could, consistently with its policy of religious neutrality, countenance a course which favoured proselytization. A happy com-

promise was made. Relief officers were instructed to seek out the relatives of so-called orphans or other persons likely to take an interest in them, adjure them to adopt and nourish the children, who would of course receive the usual house-to-house relief, but also warn the villagers that, if no such offer were made or if in future it was found that the children were not being properly supported, they would be taken away to the missionaries and would become *Kristans*. These exhortations were generally effective, and volunteers came forward to adopt the waifs. The motive was probably not any objection to an alien faith, but rather that love of children which is such a pleasant feature throughout India and a vague conviction that the little ones would grow up happier in the freedom of the familiar woods than amid strange faces and in some form of bleak confinement to which the Sahibs, with their queer passion for order and regulations, might subject them. But there were a few for whom no sponsors were forthcoming; and these were dispatched to the mission station. Owing to the wild nature of the country, difficult for transport and notoriously infested by man-eating tigers and panthers, I used to carry these children along with me till their number was sufficient to make it worth while arranging an escort to their destination. I hired carts for conveying them from one of my halting-places to another and bought one or two cows to provide them with milk; and I put a kindly orderly in charge of the crèche.

In one small tract of my charge the number of orphans was surprisingly large; the people resolutely refused to undertake the care of them and said that they were quite willing that they should be taken away and made Christians. This puzzled me. The carts began to get over-full. So, arriving at a village whence the mission station could be reached in one day's march, I collected

a few stalwarts to aid the orderly in seeing the children safely carried thither. Next morning the children were stowed in the bullock-carts ready for the start. I was in my tent making two copies of a nominal list of the children, one of which was to be returned to me signed by the missionaries in token of safe receipt and the other would be kept by them. I had just finished and was about to go out and see the cortège off, when there arose a great hubbub—screams, wailings and execrations. I rushed out and found a crowd of excited women tearing the children out of the carts and loudly defying the expostulations of the orderly. Having calmed the tumult, I inquired the cause. The women then confessed that the children, so far from being orphans, were their own. 'We saw', they explained, 'that the children who were being taken along with you got plenty of food and excellent milk and grew quite fat on it. We thought it would be a good thing if our children also had the food and the milk. So we said they were orphans. But we didn't want to lose them; and we followed you from place to place, hiding in the jungle so that you should not see us. Our children are much better for being so well looked after, but now that they are going to be sent away it is high time they went home.' Generally I found the Gonds so simple-minded as to be incapable of inventing a lie. This was a striking exception. But it was clear that they saw no moral obliquity in their conduct, though they were not blind to its humorous side. For their confession was open and unashamed; but every now and then the individual entrusted to make it would suddenly raise a fold of her garment so as to conceal her face from me and, her own frame dithering with suppressed giggles, would turn to her next-door neighbour in mute appeal to her to carry on the narrative. Such feelings are infectious; and my only comment on their explanation was an

explosion of laughter. This broke down the barriers. The ladies gave full vent to their pent-up merriment and presently departed in high glee with their offspring, for whose sustenance on the journey home I purchased all the sweetmeats which a tiny shop afforded.

It may be asked how, in a country devoid of railways and almost devoid of roads, the kitchens could be kept supplied with grain, and how the many thousands who were on house-to-house relief were able to get foodstuffs in exchange for the coin which they received. In 1897 this problem was solved for me by the Banjaras,<sup>1</sup> those honest and enterprising carriers who for centuries had been entrusted with supplies and even treasure, which they

<sup>1</sup> It is tempting to connect the Banjaras (the second 'a' is long—Banjāra) with the Gipsies. Romany has many Sanskrit and Hindustani words, to which the Gipsies in their westward migration added other words from Persian, Greek, and Slavonic languages. Grierson derives the name Banjar from the Sanskrit *Vanijyakāras*, meaning a merchant. Some have seen a likeness between Banjara and the names by which Gipsies are described in various European countries—Atzigan, Zingaro, Gitano, Zigeuner. (The names applied to them by us and by the French indicate their progress through Egypt and Bohemia, though in Scotland they are better known as Tinkers, a word perhaps connected with Zingaro and other continental names.) I can vouch for the fact that the dress of the Banjaras is not dissimilar from that which the Gipsies wore in the days when the latter were represented to our childish minds as bogeys who would kidnap us.

I am not aware whether there is any foundation for such a theory; and perhaps the fact that Gipsies were in eastern Europe as early as the first half of the fourteenth century but Banjaras are first heard of in India in 1504 is an argument, though not a conclusive argument, against it. They were sellers as well as carriers of grain and furnished supplies for the commissariat of the armies of the Delhi Sultans in the sixteenth century and for Wellesley in his campagin of 1803.

I am told that the Banjaras no longer ply their carrying trade and that their splendid breed of hounds (of which I once had a fine specimen) is now extinct. Their trade was no doubt ruined by the growth of railways—which, by the way, have now penetrated both the districts where I had to fight the famine—and of better roads and latterly by the motor-car. Even in 1900 I found a few Banjaras taking up land and settling down to cultivation. 'Behold!' the neighbouring peasants said to me, 'the Banjara has become a *ryot*. Was such a thing ever heard of?'



conveyed from end to end of India, protected by the size of their bands and the ferocity of their great hounds. Knowing that grain was wanted and that money was being disbursed, they poured into the district with strings of little donkeys and ponies bearing sacks of rice and wheat, and, since they did not try to profiteer, kept prices at a reasonable level. Only once did I have trouble; and that was in a comparatively civilized corner of the district, which the Banjaras had neglected because communications were easier and there were substantial Hindu merchants. The merchants, however, hoarded their stocks in hope of getting higher prices; and I found that the head constable in the principal town, who had been ordered to open a kitchen, had, with fatal results, hesitated to do so because the price demanded for grain was far above the market rate at which he was supposed to make his purchases. My remonstrances with the *banias* were in vain. They declared they had no grain in their stores. Knowing this to be false, I deemed myself justified in adopting illegal and drastic methods, threatening to force an entry into their storehouses and requisition whatever grain I found, paying at the market rate. The result was that ample stocks were revealed and sold at a fair price to the kitchen and to those on other forms of relief. Meantime I had sent out an SOS and, before I left the place, had the satisfaction of seeing troops of Banjaras arrive with supplies. And so the crisis was ended.

One other place did indeed give difficulty. But there the Banjaras could not venture during the rains, since it was known to be a death-trap at that season. Many years before some European missionaries had tried to settle there; all had perished within a few weeks. The place was regarded as unapproachable, and the stock of food became exhausted. So I had to go there with a little army of men carrying relief. Though I dosed the carriers

beforehand daily with quinine, all of them contracted the mysterious local fever, and not a few died, some in coma, some in delirium. I was myself stricken and suffered from attacks for some years afterwards. These attacks came always at the same season, whether I was in India or in England. At last I discovered from experience that quinine was useless in this fever but that moderate doses of arsenic effected a quick and certain cure.

In 1899 the position was very different. The district where I then served was more open, and the Banjaras were not wont to visit it. Government had issued a new and strict order that, with the onset of the monsoon, all large works should be closed and the workers sent to their homes and freely admitted to the kitchens. This was in principle a humane and wise decision; for conditions on the works during the rainy season were comfortless and unhealthy; and it was reasonably expected that those who were not in need but had been attracted to the works by the light task exacted would be deterred by caste scruples from taking their meals in public cheek by jowl with untouchables. Unfortunately this expectation was falsified in that district, where there was an unusually large proportion of low-caste Hindus in the case of whom communal meals afforded no test of need. Kitchens were here very numerous and formed an important item in the policy of relief. As soon as the rains broke and the works were closed, thousands of hefty *chamars* (dressers of leather) and others of low caste overran the kitchens, shoving away the worthy bidden guest, raising the number to be fed to several times that for which equipment and staff existed and rendering it difficult, now that the fields were dank and ways were mire, to provide the quantities of rice that were necessary. The merchants, seeing profit in this quandary, refused to release their stocks. As a short-term

measure I had to requisition strings of carts and send them in charge of orderlies to the headquarters of the district to bring supplies. But some long-term action also was essential if the kitchens were not to fall into disorder. So I took upon myself, in defiance of the government mandate, to close the kitchens to all future applicants save those who were clearly in distress and to strike off the kitchen registers the names of those who were able-bodied and capable of looking after themselves, directing them in both cases to repair to the local works which I had opened near their own homes. I at once reported this action to the authorities. So flagrant a contravention of orders naturally caused some commotion. But personal investigation on the spot showed that the course I had adopted was the only possible one, and those in charge of other areas where the population was similarly composed were enjoined to follow my act of disobedience. The Commission which afterwards reviewed the relief operations remarked that the indiscriminate opening of kitchens was unsuitable in districts where caste scruples afforded no test of need.

While government undertook the preservation of life, it used private contributions—mainly the Mansion House Fund—for setting on their legs those cultivators who had suffered most severely from failure of crop and death of cattle and could not, without aid, do the ploughing and sowing for a future crop. There are two crops in India—the autumn crop (mainly rice and millets) sown at the commencement of the rains and reaped in the autumn, and the winter, or more properly spring, crop (mainly wheat and field peas) sown when the rains are ceasing and reaped the next spring. It was important to give out the money (or seed-grain where this could not well be bought locally) just before the sowing, so as to avoid the disaster which ruined the efforts, already men-

tioned, of the Tughlaq Sultan. This meant that in the district where I served in 1897 most of the allotted portion of this fund had to be disbursed at the height of the hot weather just before the onset of the monsoon; for it was not a wheat-growing district. The distribution must also be made in a very brief period of time. As it was impossible for me to cover the whole of my charge, I was required to limit myself to the more civilized part (which was also the rowdier part), while one or more of the Revenue Inspectors took on this duty in the remaining and purely aboriginal part. The patwaris were instructed to make lists of deserving tenants, to assess the amount which each of these would require and to warn them to assemble on a certain date at a stated centre convenient for each group of villages. Thus I should be able to get through the job in a fortnight. I arranged a shuttle service of elephants to bring the sacks of coin to each of these centres. The district officer, who was an Indian, urged me to have an armed guard to accompany the elephants and to keep order during the distribution. I agreed—fortunately; for there were a lot of roughs in the neighbourhood, very different from the docile aborigines; and these swarmed round me at each centre and were only prevented from loot by a cordon of village police (whose weapons are spears) stiffened by constables armed with loaded rifles. Cholera is normally prevalent at that time of year; infected persons came in from stricken villages and were themselves struck down. Hence the work had to be speeded up and the crowds dismissed as fast as possible, lest the disease should spread in gatherings which over-taxed the local water-supplies. So all day long, seated under inadequate shade in a temperature that in the middle hours soared to 120 degrees and over, I went through the list of one village after another, questioning those whose names were entered, giving out

the money, exhorting them to use it properly and sending them back to their homes. Night falls. I make up my accounts. Meantime some of the more substantial tenants whose circumstances hardly justify gratuitous help but do not permit them to do a full sowing of their land are busy with the patwaris, making out mortgages for an easy loan from government; and I have to see that these deeds are properly drawn and executed. All this takes me to about midnight. Then begins the march to the next centre. A couple of hours' sleep on a camp bed by the roadside, and then on again to open shop just after dawn.

If vigilance over money transactions was necessary in other forms of relief, it was doubly so in the case of the Mansion House Fund. Money had to be shovelled out very fast; the time for investigation was limited; and the patwaris, on whom one had largely to rely, were not restrained by the knowledge that they were dealing with government money and that expenditure would be carefully scrutinized. Here was a heap of money freely given by the British and other nations. Why should it not be freely spent? Why should not everybody have a bit of this nice windfall? And yet, even here, I could find but little fault with the patwaris. Perhaps—I merely suggest perhaps—this was partly due to my luck in catching out two dishonest patwaris at the very first centre for distribution. The inhabitants of two villages, which I had visited some time before and found to be not in worse case than the normal, were described to me by their patwaris as utterly ruined. Since my visit, they declared, both villages had been burned down; all cattle had perished, any little stock of grain had been destroyed. It sounded rather too bad to be true. My eye wandered in the direction of those villages. I should like to jump on a horse, ride there, and see for myself. But they were miles away; and here I was, working against time, sitting with

the money-sacks in a circle of police, a predatory mob seething outside. It couldn't be done. I questioned the villagers closely. They bore out the patwaris' tale and put up a piteous appeal. The evidence seemed fool-proof. Yet I distrusted it and delayed the decision till evening. But further cross-examination produced no other result, and I was about to give out the money when a last question caught a villager tripping—a small inconsistency, but enough; and from it the whole tale was unravelled and finally the confession was made, how the patwaris had induced the villagers to enter into a conspiracy, had coached them in the evidence to be given, and had arranged for a division of the proceeds among the parties concerned. The patwaris were dispatched to headquarters with a police guard and a report of their doings. The effect was wholesome.

The distribution of that money occupied me during a fortnight of gruelling (and grilling) work—day after day, night after night, with only two or three hours of sleep, constant anxiety, and intense heat. To add to one's troubles, it was impossible, while dealing in hot haste with large sums of money, and assisted only by a make-shift clerk of unknown antecedents, to keep a sufficiently careful eye upon the balances at the close of each day. When I came to compare the final balance with my accounts, I was some 200 rupees short. I sent in the account with the deficit balance shown and added a cheque, which I could ill afford from the salary I then drew, on my private account to make up the loss. Two relief officers, one a member of the I.C.S., the other a military officer, similarly found themselves short and thereupon put an end to themselves, though in the case of at least one, whose father was a man of large means, there would have been no difficulty in finding the cash, even if, in the circumstances, government had demanded .

such a course. I am sure that in each of those tragedies the deficit was merely the occasion, the last straw that bore down men whose nerves had been racked by depressing surroundings, who had been cut off for long periods from those of their own race, burdened with strange responsibilities and worn out by constant exposure to a trying climate. The work was a tremendous strain. It was a battle against the forces of nature; and nature is certain and inexorable, while the best laid schemes of men gang aft a-gley. Transport would fail; horses would go lame; servants would be prostrated by malaria; outbreaks of cholera, sudden crises on big works, storms and floods would disorganize plans and tour programmes—I was sometimes held up by swollen torrents which no elephant could cross and had to pass the night on the ground in heavy rain or among clouds of mosquitoes. And yet I found great compensations. There was but little office work; it was direct dealing with men; and it was out-door work. There was no doubt about its utility; for in sparsely populated areas, where there was plenty of land to spare, no Malthusian scruples arose. And it was a pleasure to succour these simple, amiable and rather helpless aborigines.

Let it not be thought that, because much has here been said of hunting down trickeries, I am indicting a whole nation. The Indian is neither more nor less honest than the general run of men in other nations. But famine relief gave vast scope for the less virtuous elements to do their worst. Temporary staff had to be sharked up from all available quarters; one could not pick and choose; and the temptations were very great.

## Chapter V

### MAGIC

TALKING of the aborigines leads me on to say something about Indian magic. The aborigines, with their primitive beliefs, are given to various forms of wizardry.

The Gonds are in some ways quite sensible folk. I have already said that they will desert a village which is scourged with cholera. And I found them helpful in my efforts to stamp out that disease. This was one of the duties imposed on relief officers during the famines; and a store of permanganate of potash was given to us for disinfecting wells.<sup>1</sup> In the purely aboriginal district where I worked in 1897 there were very few wells. Water was procured, as far as possible, from rivers and streams. The Gonds had the sense to scoop holes near the river-bed, into which the water filtered. If cholera broke out, it was easy to treat these holes; and the Gonds could be trusted to draw water only from the disinfected sources and would even, when my back was turned, purloin permanganate from the tin boxes in which I carried it—an act of petty larceny at which I gladly connived. (It was very different

<sup>1</sup> The method was to put a small amount of permanganate in a metal vessel, lower the vessel into the well, draw it up, pour the water it contained back into the well, lower again and repeat the process till all the permanganate had been dissolved. After waiting an interval you drew water from the well to test it. If the water was pink the work was done. If it was colourless or yellow, you added more permanganate and proceeded as before. It was reckoned that at least twenty minutes were required for the cleansing of a deep well. A shallow well could be treated in less time. If you were able to treat all the water sources, the result was astonishing—a total cessation of the epidemic after two days. But in villages where there were Brahmans or others of high caste one or more wells might remain undisclosed (and some villages have a number of wells, some of which might be outside the range of the large-scale map of a village); and in such cases the epidemic invariably continued.



in the more civilized district where I worked in 1899. There were a few Brahmans in some of the villages, who, even when numerous deaths were occurring daily, raised strong objection to my going near a well to purify it, and even threatened violence. To this I replied that, while I recognized the strength of their caste prejudices, I could not allow these to endanger the lives of their fellow villagers and that, if they attempted violence, they would find that I was armed.)

But, sensible as the Gonds were in combating cholera, in other respects their habits were feckless—and filthy. A Gond village resembled a midden; and to enter it, especially in a break in the rains, when the maize which they plant in close proximity to their houses shut out the least draught from the hot stagnant atmosphere within, was an experience one had to get used to. The small millets on which they subsisted, broadcast on stony soil which defied the plough, would in a favourable year yield an ample crop; but they would reap only what was required for the year and leave the rest for the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field. And the system of burning down successive patches of valuable forest for the enrichment of the soil had only recently ceased.

They were, moreover, given to the crudest forms of superstition and witchcraft. Many a time, where there was a meeting of two of the narrow paths which intersect the vast jungles, I have found a paper-bag full of boiled rice so placed that the wayfarer by night could hardly fail to thrust his foot in it and thus transfer to himself the ailment from which he who had arranged the trap was suffering. In one case there was substituted for the usual bag of rice a tiny model bed, neatly and carefully made, which presumably represented the sick-bed of the patient. Still stronger was their belief in the potency of incantations. Here they were dependent on the Baigas, reputed

to be more aboriginal even than the Gonds and to be masters of magic. I met many instances of this. In one remote and miserable village, the headman complained that the deer and wild pig had broken down their fences and destroyed the small remnant of their crops. But, even in the midst of this general calamity, he deemed it worth while to hurry to my tent by night and implore aid in an individual woe. A girl had just been bitten by a krait. I offered such advice as I could think of, and also a bottle of brandy, since doses of brandy were then held to counteract the snake poison to some extent. The headman's sincerity was proved by his rejection of the tempting prospect of a debauch—for these aborigines are deplorably addicted to strong liquor. 'I do not want your medicine; I do not want your *sharab*.' 'Then what do you want?' I asked. 'Your coolies.' Then the light dawned on me. Difficulty of transport had forced me to employ a small number of Baigas as carriers. I sent for the coolies, explained the situation and asked if they could do anything about it. 'Of course we can cure the girl,' they said. 'We shall sit round her and chant *mantras*, and she will be well.' Quite unconvinced but wishing to do what I could to relieve the headman's anxiety, I told them to go and do their damndest. When leaving the village next morning, I inquired from the headman about the girl. He was obviously surprised and pained that I should ask such a silly question. '*Of course* she's all right.' I rode away rebuked but muttering 'No krait'.

Striking indeed is the contrast between the orator (sometimes displaying an eloquence in English speech far more perfect than that of his English colleagues) who addresses the legislative bodies in India, or the facile student who haunts Hampstead and Gower Street, and the aboriginal tribesman who, in the seclusion of the forests and hills whither Rajput and other invaders have driven him, still

reckons distance by the time that a leaf, placed on his head while he travels, takes to wither, and the hour by the number of ox-goad lengths between the sun and the horizon. Sir Alfred Lyall truly said: 'India is like a mighty army marching with uneven steps through all the centuries from the fifth to the nineteenth', and the twentieth might now be added. The chasm between the highly civilized and the semi-barbarous, between abounding wealth and grinding poverty, though not confined to India, finds there its greatest depth and breadth and presents a problem for the future little less disturbing than those of communal rivalry or growing over-population. And yet penetration by road and railway is gradually breaking down the barriers that for long have kept the aborigines in a world apart. And the process had begun still earlier through the introduction of law and order and some sort of organization. The need of means of communication with the outside world had already made the aborigine bilingual; and, under surrounding Hindu influence, a kind of dualism had crept into his religion. Though he is in reality an animist, the Hindu claims him as a Hindu. The Gond will feast on the carcass of a dead cow but will not kill the sacred beast. I was once riding through a trackless jungle, accompanied by two Gond guides and a Hindu orderly, when I came across a pack of wild dogs—those terrors to the other denizens of the forest, who will drive even a tiger out of his favourite haunts. I fired a useless shot as the pack scattered, and then found that they had been busy tearing to pieces a cow which had wandered into the jungle. The cow was dying. I drew my hunting-knife and told one of the Gonds to kill it. He refused. I asked the Hindu and the Gonds whether they had any objection to my putting an end to the sufferings of a creature that could not possibly survive. They emphatically said that it were best I should kill it. Which

I did—the only time I have committed the crime of cow-killing. I wonder whether the Gond would have refused to do the deed if the Hindu had not been present. I have sometimes asked Hindus how they can, conformably with their caste obligations, accept water and even food from one who eats unclean and forbidden things. They explained the paradox by saying that the Gond is a cultivator, and every cultivator is a gentleman. A perfectly clear and satisfying reply.

To return to incantations. Belief in them is not confined to the aborigines. When I was winding up the relief work in my area at the close of the famine of 1899 I was suddenly taken desperately ill with a complaint which, I afterwards read in a medical book, usually kills its victim by asphyxiation in the space of two hours. I was out in the wilds. No word could be got through to the doctor, who was away at the other end of the district and arrived only when, as he said, I had somehow cured myself. For five days and nights I had lain choking, unable to sleep a wink,<sup>1</sup> eat a morsel or drink a drop. An old retired Indian forest officer, a sturdy, reliable man, whom I had employed on some of the famine operations, came to see me. He was deeply moved, shed tears over what he

<sup>1</sup> Not literally true as regards sleep. An Indian apothecary happened to pass through the place where I was laid up, looked in on me, shook his head and gave me to understand I was dying. He had no medical qualifications, but he had a hypodermic syringe, and I asked him to give me an injection. He did so and sat watching by the light of a candle as I went to sleep. I had a terrible dream. I was crushed against the wall of a racket-court by a dragon which grew ever bigger, and then suddenly I found myself in a matchbox, where a spider similarly grew and squashed me. This double dream recurred hundreds of times. When I awoke the little man was still watching me by the light of the candle. I said I supposed I had slept twenty-four hours. 'Two minutes', said the apothecary. The speed at which dreams take place is almost incredible. Aeschylus says:

ἐν δ' ὀνείρασιν  
 . . . . . ἀμφὶ σοι πάθη  
 δρώσα πλείω τοῦ ξυνεύδοντος χρόνου.

believed to be my death-bed and adjured me, as a last resort, to let him call in the local medicine-man. Knowing no English, he spoke of him as (literally translated) 'the fellow who smites a breath', and declared that he would do nothing but recite *mantras*, make passes with his hands and alternately hold his breath and exhale deeply. (A man who for years had made a study of Hinduism once told me he had come to the conclusion that it was at bottom a system of breathing exercises!) An obstinate determination to demonstrate my disbelief in magic and my faith in allopathic treatment led me to refuse the offer, though I was bitterly sorry to disappoint the good man, who bade me what was meant as a last farewell and departed weeping.

And yet strange things do happen in the East; and the following experience shows that Indian methods (whether of the Ayurvedic or of the Yunani school of medicine or of some occult art) may succeed where western science fails. One of my orderlies, an old ex-soldier, developed a terrible outbreak on his neck. Fearing a malignant growth, I sent him to the late Sir James Roberts, an eminent surgeon and a friend of mine. His pencilled reply was alarming: 'Deep operation at once. Am keeping him in hospital.' In course of time Devi Singh returned, temporarily cured. A year later the trouble returned and a second operation became necessary. This seemed to be successful, and for a long time there was no recrudescence. Then one morning I saw to my dismay that that dreadful red weal had appeared again on the man's neck. I was just starting from Delhi to Simla. The orderly was to follow me a few days afterwards. I told him that, as soon as he arrived in Simla, he must go with a letter from me to the surgeon. He said he supposed that this meant a third operation; and he said it very sadly. For the poor old man, being a high caste Hindu, hated the idea of detention in

hospital, where he might have to eat food cooked by who knows what base-born hands. He had even brought me stories of cruelty and corruption among the attendants at the hospital. I was sorry for him but said the operation must be performed. Yet it never was performed. When Devi Singh arrived in Simla I gave him the letter and bade him take it to the surgeon. With a triumphant smile he turned the affected side of his neck towards me. Where less than a week before there had been an ugly growth, extruding and inflamed, the skin was now smooth and wholesome as that of a child. I was astounded at what seemed to me a miracle. But the orderly showed no surprise. He said he had been frightened at the idea of another term in hospital and had therefore gone to his own *Vaid* (doctor of the Ayurvedic school), who had taken a little salve in his hand and smeared it over the diseased spot, whereupon the trouble had immediately vanished. I don't pretend to explain this; but I can vouch for the fact that, though Devi Singh continued in my service and afterwards in that of my successor, there was no return of that growth. For years after I had retired he regularly wrote to me and he never complained of any ailment save an occasional cold—'pumonia' he called it.

People are apt to think of Indian magic in terms of the juggler. The ordinary juggler, clever as he is, does not deal in genuine magic and spells. He is fallible. I have seen him fail in the mango-tree trick, and he has taught me, for a consideration, some of his methods. But there are members of the conjuring profession who undoubtedly possess remarkable hypnotic powers. Though I had read detailed accounts of the famous rope trick, I had never believed in it till I met a man who had actually seen it. He had been an officer in the army but had developed lung trouble and was compelled to reside either in Africa or in Switzerland. It was in San Moritz, where I was

staying at the Kulm hotel for winter sports, that I met him. His place at table was next to mine, and one evening he began to question me about Indian conjurers. I told him of some of the clever tricks I had seen but said I had never seen the rope trick and didn't believe in it. I noticed a curious look come over his face—a serious look, almost a look of fear. And he recounted to me in an awed voice the following experience. He was staying at an hotel in South Africa. He and the other guests went into the courtyard to watch an Indian juggler. So good were the tricks that, when the hat was sent round, a substantial sum was produced. The juggler said that if they would raise the amount to £10 he would show them the rope trick. They agreed. He then threw a rope into the air. The rope remained taut and vertical. The juggler next sent a boy climbing up it till lost to sight, and then called to him to come down, whereupon the rope collapsed on the ground and the boy walked out from behind the spectators. One of the guests suggested that, before communicating with one another, they should repair to the coffee-room and each write down what he or she had seen. The written accounts were found to agree; and after discussion the guests concluded that they had been the victims of collective hypnotism. Many years after, a nurse who was tending one of my sisters in her last illness related to me a similar experience; and she also gave it as her opinion that the illusion was produced by hypnotism. She was a sensible, practical woman, who had frequently acted as companion to invalids ordered to take extensive travel. She gave her narrative quietly in a matter-of-fact manner. I regard these two persons as perfectly reliable witnesses.

I have not myself seen the rope trick. But I have seen an instance of powerful hypnotic influence. At a garden party given by an Indian one of the entertainments was conjuring. The tricks, though not out of the common,

were very clever. Towards evening, when many of the guests had departed, the conjurer turned his attention to the host's servants, who had crowded into the background to see the show. They immediately began to do the most absurd things—things which no sedate up-country Indian servant would dream of doing before his master. And not only absurd but dangerous; for the conjurer ordered them to climb up trees and then hurl themselves to the ground. All this they did without a word of protest and happily without injury, though the tumbles might well have resulted in broken bones, even in a broken neck.

In that case immunity from injury might be explained as similar to that which a drunken man is said to enjoy and as being due to the effortless and relaxed condition in which the hypnotized persons fell, deprived as they were of will-power and force of resistance. But immunity is also alleged to be conferred supernaturally on those who expose themselves to injury and danger while engaged in religious rites. Desirous of seeing the Muharram festival, I once stationed myself on the roof of a building in the middle of a city; and, once there, I had to remain there throughout the whole night; for, until the crowds dispersed in the morning, it would have been impossible to make a way through them. It was before the growth of communal strife. So, though the Muslim processions passed by Hindu temples and were marked by excessive zeal and noise, there was no disturbance. Indeed the Hindus, who were in a big majority in the city, appeared to enjoy the *tamasha* and some of them probably joined in it. All night long the processions streamed along the streets, under the lurid light of oil-fed torches. Over the dense crowd of human beings the *tazias* (models of domed tombs made of lath and paper), gleaming with tinsel, swayed from side to side, as their bearers forced a way through the throng. Above the confused murmur and the



roll of drums and the discordant blare of horns there rose louder and louder the ceaseless chant: 'Hasan, Husain.' And from out the sea of wild faces, the fierce red light and the billows of heavy smoke there leapt here and there to the eye a horrid sight—a face wilder even than the others, a face distorted by fanaticism and mutilation, pierced by a long iron bar, of which the sharpened point had been forced into one cheek and out at the other, so that the ends of the bar stuck out some two feet on each side and dithered up and down as the devotee strode triumphantly along. I turned to the Muslims who were with me on the roof and asked if these zealots would not suffer permanent disfigurement, and perhaps worse, as the result of their mania. They assured me that no ill consequence could follow an act done in devotion to the Faith, that the men felt no pain and that the wounds would be healed by morning. It occurred to me that immunity from present pain might be produced by a dose of *bhang*. Delicacy forbade me to make further inquiries about the future consequences.

## *Chapter VI*

### ELEPHANTS AND OTHERS

THERE was once an old R.A.M.C. Colonel who used to inflict upon the mess long stories of big-game shooting, his exploits therein having been attended by strange adventures and hair-breadth escapes. Each story opened with the words, 'When I was in Bhopal'. One night, when the mess had suffered under a particularly wearisome narrative, a subaltern took advantage of the depressed silence among the audience to remark, 'When I was in Seringapatam——' He was at once interrupted by the Colonel: 'And when, Sir, were you in Seringapatam?' 'About the same time that you were in Bhopal', answered the subaltern. And that was the end of the Colonel's stories.

Yet who shall say whether the old boy was wholly a romancer? Almost incredible things do sometimes happen. I once read an account of a tiger having been wounded and followed up by the sportsmen, one of whom was armed with a shot-gun (quite a useful weapon, when loaded with ball, for close shooting in the jungle). The wounded beast went for him and, though he fired and hit it, still retained enough vitality to be thoroughly dangerous. The man, having fired both barrels, was left defenceless against attack. As the tiger charged at him, he thrust the cylinder barrels of his gun into its mouth. Its teeth tore through the thin metal and met, so that it was hooked like a fish; and the man played the tiger like a fish till another of the party ran up and dispatched it. Some years afterwards I happened to meet in camp a forest officer of a quiet and serious disposition. We got talking about tiger adventures and I mentioned this story as clearly incredible and a work of rather foolish fiction. 'But it's a fact,' he

said. 'The party consisted of several officers from the military station of Kamptee. They were shooting in a government forest of which I was in charge. I was with them at the time and saw the incident; it was exactly as described.'

I have nothing so wonderful as this to tell. But for twelve years I was in a province full of forests and wild animals; and the study of wild animals is always interesting.

And first my lord the elephant, the symbol of India, large, deliberate, benevolent. Now and then he runs amok; but so now and then does a human. I had nothing to do with wild elephants while I was in the Central Provinces. They are not found there except in one small State on the border. In 1896 indeed a herd entered the province during the monsoon, and the next year I found their huge footprints in the dried mud. It was rumoured that the herd consisted of one male who had escaped from captivity in Hyderabad in the Deccan and of some unattached females whom he had picked up in his wanderings; also that they departed northwards as though to join their fellows in the State above-mentioned. If that was true it showed remarkable instinct.

But we had tame elephants, and I must speak of one of these, who became, as elephants do, a familiar friend. He was lent by a landowner to the district officer, who was an Indian. The district officer lent him to me for transport on famine relief during the rains. Ram Sundar soon became an accepted member of my little family. Even the horses got used to him. In the evenings we all had dinner together, I sitting in the veranda of whatever place I was occupying (usually a police outpost), and the horses, buffalo, dogs, and Ram Sundar dining in the lamplight just below the veranda—or, so to say, below the salt. It was all a very cosy arrangement and quite convenient; for I could thus see that all the animals got an adequate supply

of nourishment. This was specially important in the case of Ram Sundar, since an elephant who is daily carrying a heavy load requires an enormous amount of sustenance. Ram Sundar's mahout would bid him kneel down before a magnificent pile of chupatties. The creature knelt, eyed the food, shook his head and turned a pathetic glance on his mahout and up to me, with the obvious meaning: 'I'm feeling rather dainty this evening.' But this was mere guile. He knew quite well that there was a bottle of molasses in the mahout's pocket, and nothing would induce him to touch the chupatties till the mahout had poured the molasses over them, when he would gobble them up in a trice.

When the Indian district officer departed on sick leave, the mahout told me that Ram Sundar's owner wanted him back. This may or may not have been true. But I suspected that the mahout found touring in the rains uncomfortable and wished to get home; and anyway I felt that the duties I was then discharging to humanity ought to override other considerations. The loss of the elephant would have been a serious handicap. The mahout then began to assert that Ram Sundar was suffering in health. I disbelieved this and kept the precious creature—almost to my undoing. For one morning Ram Sundar fainted. There he lay on his side, a heart-rending spectacle, his mighty limbs relaxed, an expression of profound resignation on his noble features. A double catastrophe faced me—the loss of an amiable friend (for as such I had come to value him) and the ruinous cost of indemnifying the owner and of interring so colossal a carcass. There were also added the pangs of conscience; for I had disregarded the mahout's warning and the alleged demands of Ram Sundar's owner for his return. I should be held negligently to have caused the death of what almost amounted to a stolen elephant. Not a moment was to be lost; for fainting

constitutes in the case of an elephant a symptom of the utmost gravity. There happened to be a little shop in the village—a rarity in those parts. It was stocked with glass beads, bangles, brass pots, a few cotton goods, groceries, and an assortment of simple remedies for common ailments. I bought all the last named, the whole consignment without distinction, and mixed the medicines up with ghee, turmeric, and pepper into an enormous pill. It was impossible to foretell the results of this compound, which no doubt contained elements calculated to produce quite opposite effects—purgatives and astringents, stimulants and sedatives. But it was a case of kill or cure. With the aid of a bamboo we rammed the pill down Ram Sundar's throat and awaited the result with trepidation. Presently a faint gurgling seemed to show that he was either choking or swallowing the massive bolus. Then came a twitching of the limbs; and a shudder, which might be the immediate precursor of death, ran through the huge frame. We stood around, like the pale augurs in Macaulay's *Lays*, who, muttering low, gazed in awe upon the giant arms and the blasted head. Then Ram Sundar's eyes opened. Was it to take one last look on the green earth and the sunshine that he had loved? For a moment we feared the worst. Gradually, however, a benign expression overspread his countenance. He seemed to recognize us, he seemed to smile, he did actually wink. Then he stretched himself and grunted, a nice, contented, comfortable grunt, and we knew that our friend was saved. Next day he was able to walk; but we put no load on him.

Though the elephant in captivity is generally a gentle and well-behaved creature, every now and then a wild elephant becomes obstreperous and a perfect terror. So dangerous is a 'rogue' elephant that he is at once proclaimed an outlaw and a price is set on his head, whereas to kill an ordinary wild elephant is an offence and renders

the slayer liable to a fine and confiscation of arms. I was once touring in North Lakhimpur, a wild, jungly tract of Assam to the north of the Brahmaputra. Landmarks were few and the forests were intersected by bewildering bridle-paths. So each evening I had to inquire from the villagers about the route I should follow on the next morning's march. Their instructions would run something like this: 'Go straight along the path to the east till you come to the place where coolie So-and-so was killed by a rogue elephant last year. A furlong farther on turn along the path to the left till you come to the place where So-and-so Sahib was killed by a rogue two years ago, and then take the second turning to the right.' And so on. To these simple folk the places where people had been killed by rogues formed the principal milestones; and in their small, secluded world they could not imagine anyone so foreign and so ignorant as to be unaware of these tragedies and of the very spots where they occurred. This was hardly encouraging; and in my lonely rides from one halting-place to another I used to keep a sharp look-out for the possible appearance of an elephantine head above the foliage, which, if it showed signs of hostility, would mean a wild gallop for safety.

The elephant and the bison are creatures I should never like to shoot except in self-defence. They look so splendid, so immense, so comfortable. Twice, when stalking, I have come across a bull bison, was able to crawl up to within seventy yards of him, and there lay watching. When I had watched enough I jumped up to see what the animal would do. On each occasion he merely grunted and trotted away. These two experiences make me doubtful of the assertions generally made about bison—namely, that they are dangerous and have a keen sense of smell. They may go for you if wounded; but otherwise 'their tameness is shocking to me'. And, though I was quite

near enough to give them scent, they were clearly unconscious of my presence till I revealed myself.

On the other hand, I have no scruples about shooting beasts of prey, which destroy cattle and may also destroy men, or those creatures which, when alive, eat up the crops sown by man, and, when dead, themselves provide good food for man. As to beasts of prey, I will speak of tigers anon, confining myself here to panthers.

My first encounter with a panther happened on a day of several excitements, which provided an example of the strangely mixed shooting to be had in India. I was spending a week-end at the Marble Rocks, where there are two bungalows for the accommodation of visitors to that wonderful spot where the massive waters of the Nerbudda are penned between the glittering walls of a narrow gorge. I was occupying one bungalow; the General commanding at Jubbulpore was staying two or three nights in the other. I went out early in the morning with my gun (cylinder barrels) to look for any fowl that might be afoot. Walking along a narrow path with a steep scrub-covered descent on the left, I turned a sharp corner to find my way barred by a tiger, not a dozen yards in front of me. Stealthily I moved back a pace, knelt hidden behind a bush whence I was confident that at that distance I could lodge a bullet in his brain, opened the breech of my gun, extracted the cartridges loaded with no. 6 shot, and pushed in a couple of ball cartridges, which I always carried in my pocket against eventualities. The tiger may have heard the click of the breech closing. Anyway, he disappeared like a flash down the declivity before I had time to bring the butt to my shoulder. I ran to the village exchanged my gun for a rifle and collected a few men with a view to beating him out of the nullah into which the bank descended. The only chance was to drive him up the nullah, where there were some open spaces and I might

get a shot. But the men warned me that the nullah forked and that the tiger might emerge at either of two places. So I took up my position at one of these and sent a man up a tree above the other, telling him that, if he saw the beast coming that way, he should signal to me. The beat began. The man signalled. I ran across a rough field to the other vantage-point. The man in the tree afterwards told me that, as I did so, the tiger, emerging from the scrub-covered nullah, also came into that field. My rifle was cocked and I was watching my feet as I ran, so I did not see him; but he must have seen me. He bounded back into the nullah, out at its head and across the road, just in time to meet the General, who was driving himself back to Jubbulpore in a curricule behind a pair of which he was very proud. The horses were scared, but no worse befell. Such was the early morning adventure, but there was more to come. After a late breakfast I went out with half a dozen men to beat for partridges and quail through some hollows which ran down to the river. I was waiting in an open space at the end of one of these hollows, when, instead of partridges, out trotted a panther. Again I made a rapid change of cartridges, taking out no. 6 shot and shoving in ball. This time I was successful; the beast didn't hear the click. I fired as he passed me. All that happened was that he broke into a canter and disappeared in broken ground. I thought I had missed, but on coming up to the spot where he had vanished I found him lying dead with the spherical bullet in his heart. It is surprising what a distance an animal struck in the heart will go before he falls; especially is this the case with the Scottish red deer.

Not all my experiences with panthers were so fortunate. On several occasions I have had to deal with a wounded panther, and on one of these the beast got me and gave me a nasty mauling. The panther, less clean in habit than the



tiger, is more likely to produce blood-poisoning if he gets teeth or claws into you. On this occasion he (or more precisely she) got both into me; and I was in a remote jungle, no medical aid within reach. I treated the wounds with permanganate of potash, the praises of which I have already sung in connexion with cholera. As a result I suffered no ill effects. I used the same remedy when I was twice bitten by mad dogs. There was no Pasteur Institute in India when I was first so bitten; and I could not possibly catch the next boat to Marseilles. Nevertheless government ordered me to Paris. I pointed out that I had cauterized myself with permanganate and that I should arrive in Paris too late to do any likely good. My protest was unavailing. So I had to go, paying my own expenses and arriving in bitter winter weather. The people at the Institute said they would treat me if I wished but that it would do me no good. I chose not to be treated and, after a short visit home, returned to India as soon as the authorities would permit me. On the second occasion I was one of several who were bitten. The Institute at Kasauli was then open, and government ordered *les mordus* thither. I was engaged on some pressing work at the moment and, wiser this time, disobeyed the order. I advise anyone who goes in search of dangerous game or into places where rabies is prevalent to take a supply of crystals of permanganate with him.

A remarkable incident with a panther befell my friend the late Stanley Coxon, a fine sportsman and an adventurous spirit. He and I met in camp, in the district of which he was in charge. It held plenty of game, and we went shooting each evening. We had a most successful time. Duck and snipe gathered conveniently before us. Antelope took up approachable positions. On our last day together we put some beaters through one of the large Maratha fortresses which in those parts still stand almost

unimpaired; and out of it came two bears. We bagged them both, not without excitement; for, seeing themselves headed off, they put up a fight. The next day we had to part, Coxon being bound in one direction, I in another. His way took him by a patch of jungle inhabited by a bear. I had previously passed that way and had tried to beat the bear out; but it had eluded me by making a wide circuit through fields. I told Coxon of this; and he also had a try for the bear—obviously a wily creature, for it played the same trick on him. The villagers declared that the bear, chased out of its familiar haunt, would take temporary refuge in a canyon cleft in a low range of hills to the north. Coxon accordingly had a beat up the canyon, seating himself in a tree at the bottom of the gorge. A panther streaked up the gorge, passing right under the tree, and Coxon shot it through the spine. What followed is best told in his own words as he afterwards recounted the adventure to me. ‘My luck was in, and I decided to have one more beat, though the light was failing. This time I climbed up to the top of the cliffs and took position on an overhanging rock. Behind me rose a grass slope crowned by jungle. I was looking down into the canyon where the beat was coming along, when I heard a faint rustle behind me. I turned round and saw something like a large snake worming its way just within the fringe of jungle. I fired at it with my .577. It was a second panther. It sprang at me, threw me off the rock into the canyon and fell with me. I landed on one side of a big black spherical rock. Looking round its edge, I saw the panther, still alive, on the other side. The stock of my rifle had been broken off in the fall; so I could do nothing. But to my great relief I saw the beast crawl away and die. My shot had wounded it and it had suffered injury in the crash. Then my nerves went, and I was in terror lest some other creature should come up through the canyon and attack me. I suppose

this was because I was dazed and in intense pain. So I bugled to the beaters the signal that there was danger and that they should stop the drive. They scaled the rocks, saw me below and carried me into camp.' Coxon was methodical and always had with him several men whom he had instructed in the meanings of his bugle-calls.

Of course there was no doctor at hand nor were there any anaesthetics. His wife, a practical woman, told me that she kept him going with liberal doses of whisky till they had carried him into the station. There I saw the marks on his chest where the panther had seized him or rather pushed him—two red rosettes and the skin not broken. He had fallen twenty-nine feet sheer on to the rocks; ever methodical, he had sent a man back to measure the drop. By an extraordinary chance, which had saved his life, he had landed on the rocks in an upright position, the full impact of his fall being taken by one foot, on which was concentrated the whole of the injury. And a terrible injury it was. I was able to get the foot X-rayed. The photograph showed every bone in it apparently smashed to pieces. There was nothing to be done but get him as quickly as possible to Calcutta, where he could have the best medical treatment. Two operations failed and amputation seemed inevitable. But the third operation saved the foot, and Coxon, though permanently lame, lived to do good work in the Dover Patrol during the First Great War. In the course of an adventurous life he had spent his early years in the Merchant Service.

The black sloth bear was common in the province. He is not dangerous unless wounded or cornered. I used to come upon bears early in the morning while I was riding through jungly places—generally in the beginning of the hot weather, when they were engaged in eating the sweet fleshy blossoms of the *mahua* tree,<sup>1</sup> which fall at that time

<sup>1</sup> It is from these flowers that the common Indian spirit is distilled.

of year. They always scuttled away at sight of me. But the bear is inquisitive and apt to intrude where he isn't wanted. Twice, when sleeping in the open, I have awoken at dawn to find a ring of fires kindled round the camping-ground and the servants seated by the fires and shouting. On each occasion they vowed that two tigers had persistently tried to rush the camp during the night. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico*. I was sure this was an exaggeration; it isn't the sort of thing tigers do. But I rallied the servants for having failed to arouse me, so that I might have a shot at the intruders, whatever they were. The disarming reply was that I was sleeping so sweetly that they hadn't the heart to disturb me. The second of these occasions might have been attended with serious consequences. For my two horses and three ponies which I had bought for the convenience of the older servants on the march all broke their heel-ropes in terror and fled away. I arranged a beat through the surrounding jungles in hope of capturing the runaways and possibly of getting a shot at whatever creature had alarmed them. By these means we rounded up the horses and ponies, fortunately uninjured, but we saw nothing of the marauders. In the evening, however, as we were returning with the captured steeds, I spied the tracks of two bears leading from the camp into the jungle. There could be no doubt it was these that had caused the disturbance in the previous night. Their attempt at gate-crashing had given us a lot of trouble.

Among the noxious beasts of India the most unpleasant and most guileful is the serpent. I never, to my knowledge, saw a cobra in the wild state, but I have killed not a few black kraits (all indoors) and one Russell's viper—both these kinds being much more dangerous than the cobra. A cobra's bite, even if not treated, is not necessarily lethal; if he has recently struck at something and got rid of part of his poison the dose left in his poison-sac may

not be sufficient to be fatal; for the poison is only slowly renewed.

The oddest adventure I had in connexion with snakes is so fantastic that I shall be accused of romancing. Yet it lives vividly in my memory, nor is my imagination fertile enough to invent such a tale. It happened while I was engaged on famine relief. I had had a long day, visiting a number of villages for inspection of house-to-house relief. The monsoon was on and the rain had poured down ceaselessly. It was not till eleven o'clock at night that, wet and weary, I reached the place where I was to sleep—a miserable, windowless shack of bamboo and thatch, which had at one time served as a small police outpost and had afterwards been devoted to the temporary storage of grain. I was greeted with the news that the servants had just killed a black krait under my little camp-bed. Too tired to bother about snakes, I had some food and turned in. The next day I was to give out seed-grain and money for the winter sowings. It was depressing. Quite a big percentage of the patwaris and cultivators who had gathered for the distribution were shivering with ague. From rainy morn to rainy eve I toiled. Then I had a tub of sorts and, arrayed in a thin shirt and an old pair of baggy flannel trousers, sat down to dinner at a little folding-table placed on the edge of the veranda. Suddenly a beast slipped up inside the left leg of my trousers and bit me sharply on the knee. I jumped to my feet, upsetting the table but with commendable presence of mind clutching and saving the whisky bottle. The servants, hearing the crash, came running to learn the cause. I said I believed I was bitten by a snake, possibly a fellow of the krait they had killed the evening before. Anyway, I said, if I was to die, the snake also should die—a sentiment in which they all heartily concurred. The creature had meantime got into the seat of my trousers. I asked if anyone was bold enough

to compress the bulge in which it had lodged, so that it should not escape when I divested myself of my trousers. A devoted orderly volunteered; and presently we stood in a circle round my nether garments, which were held firmly on the ground and enveloped the wriggling form, I clad only in my shirt and each of us armed with a stick. As I told the orderly to let go, every weapon was raised to deal a mortal blow at the offender. And then out jumped no snake but a large rat. Such was our feeling of surprise and relief and so rapid was the rat's flight into the bungalow, that not a single blow fell on it. I washed out the wound on my knee (quite a substantial one) with disinfectant, resumed my dinner and so to bed. Awaking next morning in the grey dawn, I saw an object lying on the mud floor and got out of bed to examine it. It was a dead rat. The idea flashed into my mind that this was the beast that had bitten me, and I was instantly appalled by the thought that I must be very poisonous. 'The dog it was that died.' But after calm deliberation I formed the theory that the use of the building for grain storage had attracted rats, and the presence of rats had attracted snakes; that the rat in question had been bitten by a snake and, instinctively making for a hole, had chosen the leg of my trousers as the nearest one available, and then had crawled out from some hiding-place during the night in a dying condition and succumbed to the effects of the snake-bite. Maybe my theory was correct. Anyway, it offered a possible explanation of an odd incident.

The larger deer which are common in India, the sambar and the chital, provide, in my opinion, neither good meat nor good sport. The country folk appreciate them as food, but their flesh is coarse. They haunt thick jungle and cannot be stalked, unless one encounters them in the twilight of morning or evening, when they are moving out to their nightly meals on crops or grass or are returning

therefrom.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise the only way is to get them in a drive. I have always fought shy of shooting driven deer; it doesn't seem fair to them. So I shot them in beats only on rare occasions—when I found myself camped on the property of some landowner, who might be just a 'bonnet laird' with a small estate mainly composed of jungle. Then one was expected to shoot anything that put in an appearance. The laird would be ready enough to propose a drive. For he knew that it was the Sahib who would pay the beaters and that he himself and his tenants would reap the spoil. The spoil might be a stag or a wild boar or a panther. Many Hindus, even of good caste, will eat deer and wild pig, both of which are clean feeders; and panthers prey on cattle and are best exterminated. Moreover, the squire's reputation is raised if the Sahib thinks his forest worth exploring and joins him in the quest for game; and he and his folk enjoy an afternoon's sport just as much as other people do. So he and I and the male population of the village set out together. I can picture the scene as we move up a rough jungle path. It is quite a procession; for the local magnate affects a tatterdemalion pomp. In front march his retainers, a wild-looking crowd, armed with *jezails*—long muzzle-loaders with flints or fuses. As the men lurch along the path, the muzzles of these weapons sway from side to side, pointing perilously in our direction. Imagination pictures the hail of slugs or rusty nails which would be discharged if one of these obsolete guns went off by mistake; and the squire and I, seated on our horses just behind this fantastic rabble, offer excellent targets. He and I are armed each with a double express, carried by our own shikaris. Behind trails a line of beaters; and the village band brings up the rear. These little shoots

<sup>1</sup> In the sportsman's paradise described in the latter part of the next chapter it was possible to stalk these deer, the forest being largely composed of open grass-land.

were pleasant occasions and gave satisfaction to all concerned.

It was on one of these occasions that I shot a really fine sambhar in a way which disproves the theory held by some that the blow of a bullet on an antler renders a stag unconscious for a time. The theory probably originates in the fact (I am told it is a fact but have had no opportunity of verifying it) that a blow on the horn of an antelope or a gazelle does actually produce this effect. Now the inner core of an antelope's horn is an integral and permanent part of its body, so that a violent concussion on it might have stunning consequences. But the antlers of a stag are annually shed and are no permanent part of his body; they are merely an excrement like nails or hair. I was standing behind a bush during one of these drives when this noble stag walked in front of me on the other side of the bush. It was a simple shot, and I was certain of hitting him in the heart. I fired the left barrel of my express—a barrel which I always kept loaded with a solid bullet in case I had to fire through brushwood. The stag, instead of falling dead as he ought to have done, twisted round and before I could get in a second barrel was hidden in dense foliage. Then he dashed out into an open glade, going strong and obviously uninjured. I felled him with a lucky shot. The first bullet had struck his antler, which at the moment was thrown back and covered his heart, went clean through the antler and lay just embedded in the skin and expanded by the resistance of the hard horn to the likeness of a penny. The beam, forty-four inches in length and eight inches in circumference at the base, was intact save for the hole driven through it and a little splintering where the mushroomed bullet had emerged.

There are smaller fry, such as the muntjac (rib-faced or barking deer), the four-horned antelope, the gazelle and, in the open fields, the common antelope or black buck.



All of these provide excellent food. There is also a large deer, found in a few localities, which dwells mainly in grassy glades and can be stalked. This is the swamp deer (*Rucervus duvaucelli*), a fine animal about the size of our red deer. He has a brow-point at the base of each beam; the beam has neither bez nor trez but blossoms out into a bunch of tops. The finest heads have twelve tines, each beam bearing a brow-point and five tops. I have shot two of these deer with fourteen tines; but the antlers were inferior in length and symmetry to those of the twelv-tiners and were probably backward-going. Of all the forms of jungle sport the stalking of these swamp deer was the most fascinating.

But, whatever the sport, the jungle itself was a source of joy—the mystery of the forest-clad hills, the green undergrowth of karounda bushes, black rocks fringing shadowy ravines, pale grass, gnarled tree-trunks, clumps of graceful bamboo. There is an elf-like look about it all. Man is an intruder on a Tom Tiddler's ground, the demesne of beasts. And one may suddenly come upon the beasts, as I have sometimes done when, bent not on hunting but on watching their ways, I have crawled up over some lonely pool, where deer of several sorts, with a young bison among them, were quenching their thirst amicably together and maybe drinking each other's healths.

Someone may ask: How does the stalking of the swamp deer compare with that of the red deer? And how the tropical forest with the Scottish highlands? There is no comparison; each has its own charm. But the glory of the northern hills, and the exertions and excitements they provide, are far the greater. There the sportsman leaves the lowland for the exalted tops. The tramp up the long glen may be arduous. But what sights and sounds are there to delight eye and ear! The fresh breeze flicking the dew from the sprit-grass; the noise of many waters mur-

mured in unison by a maze of bustling burns; the glory of the purple heather; the delicate blue of harebells nestling beneath grey crags. And how great the reward when we win to the wide prospects, look down through rifts of vapour into steep corries, hear the croak of the ptarmigan around us and watch the wheeling of the eagles above! And then the stalk—not in the heavy air of a sun-baked valley, not through rank growth and strands of tall grass, but facing the keen wind, creeping up bare hill-sides, crawling over rocks or through cold morass, pulling up a shallow slack or plunging waist-deep along a chilly burn. Often after a chequered day, when sunlight has struggled with mist and rain, and hope has fought against anxiety, I have seen the words of the prophet fulfilled: 'But it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.' Below us, where we stand on the backbone of the highlands, there opens out a mighty expanse of tumbled mountains, and the sea beyond, and beyond the sea the isles, all 'bathed in the rays of the great setting flame'. We stand awhile in silent awe, the stalker's eyes softened with love of his native land, and then begin the long trek homeward, while the splendour fades and the darkness gathers. What matter the holes and peat-hags in which we stumble along! We have had a great day; we have been all out. A glance behind shows the antlers of a noble hart swaying on the pony's back. And in front there glimmers out at last a light from the wee lodge among the pines, with promise of warm bath and fireside and an easy chair.

And yet I look back with yearning to those far-off days, to the familiar sights and sounds of the jungle, the bitter scent of its leaves, the secrets it might suddenly yield. It was a treasure-house of wonder and witchery.

## *Chapter VII*

### TIGERS

PERHAPS I have already dealt too much with jungle-shooting. But I must add something about tigers. For mention of India at once calls tigers and tiger-hunting to the imagination. Here imagination often falls into two fallacies. One is that the tiger is a raging, ramping beast who kills you as soon as he sees you and then eats you. Not at all. He is naturally a slinking, nervous beast, frequenting the shelter of heavy jungle and only too quick to get out of the way and avoid any suspicious sound or sight—though later on in this chapter I shall tell of a curious exception to this rule. A tiger bolts away from a man; and yet man is the easiest creature to catch. Can it be that this monarch of the jungle is himself a bit of a sportsman and scorns to seize so defenceless a prey? Or does he despise human flesh as inferior food? Anyway, he does not attack man unless he is wounded or a man-eater. When wounded he attacks fiercely and cleverly in self-defence. The man-eating habit is induced by old age, disease, or a crippling injury, any of which causes will prevent a tiger from pursuing his normal prey. Perhaps yet another cause may be the up-bringing of a cub. The mother may perish before the cub has learned to hunt properly; or she may for some reason have taken to human flesh and have taught her young to do likewise. The following incidents may have some bearing on this theory.

I had arranged to shoot on the rifle-range early one morning. The day before I was to shoot, the sergeant-instructor came and asked me (I was then in command of the local volunteers) if I would postpone the engagement and let a volunteer of the name of Thompson shoot his full

course, since he could stay in the place only one day and must then return to his own charge, where there was no range. Of course I agreed. (I should add that the range was quite close to the European station; some of the firing-points were situated on the golf links; and the targets were backed by flat-topped hills. There were also low hills behind; and these hills offered good objects to storm when the volunteers had a field-day. Their zeal in attack was whetted by the knowledge that I used to purchase a barrel of beer and secrete it beforehand on the point to be assaulted.) The next morning I was working at home before breakfast when the sergeant-instructor burst into the room in a state of wild excitement. 'Sir,' he cried, 'you should have come out this morning. Pity you didn't. You'd have bagged a tiger.' He then gave me the following narrative. The volunteer, Thompson, was a forest officer and an experienced hunter of tigers. Armed with an old Martini-Henry, the rifle then used by the volunteers, he had taken position at the furthest firing-point and was about to commence, when a strange noise was heard, apparently coming from a clump of rocks near the targets. 'That's a tiger,' said Thompson. He and the sergeant walked down the range; and there, sure enough, was a tiger among the rocks, only his hind-quarters visible. Thompson commenced independent firing into its stern. But the tiger didn't stir; obviously it had got jammed between two large boulders. Thompson went round to the other side of the rocks, but found he could not get a shot, the animal's head being completely concealed. So they lighted some dry grass and sticks and rammed them into a crevice between the rocks in the hope of smoking the tiger out. Still the beast wouldn't budge. Thompson then returned to its hind-quarters, seized its tail and gave a vigorous pull. Out came the tiger with a 'woof, woof', wounded and dazed but still capable of mischief.

Thompson snatched up his rifle and dispatched it before it had time to recover its equanimity. It was a young tiger in bad condition; and this no doubt accounted for its inability to free itself from the fissure in which it had hidden and to deal with Thompson before he dealt with it. The incident naturally caused some stir. A tigress accompanied by a cub had been shot twelve miles away some months earlier. The cub had escaped. It was thought probable that the cub, deprived of its mother before it had learned to hunt, had suffered privation and had wandered in close to the station where it could easily catch cattle and perhaps men. Its fate was pathetic, but no doubt its destruction was a good riddance.

This same Thompson was connected with the second incident—an incident which suggests that a man-eating tigress may bring up her family in the like unpleasant habit. A certain ford of the Nerbudda river became notorious for the number, running into three figures, of human 'kills' by tigers. One morning, when I emerged from a small bungalow near this ford, I found the footprints of three tigers just under the window close to which I had slept. A slight shower had fallen during the night, so that the tracks were perfectly clear. I followed them up; each tiger had taken a different path into a big tract of jungle, one separating off here, another there. So serious did the depredations become that Thompson, who was a skilled shikari, was put on special duty to stop the nuisance. It was not till he had shot a number of tigers, some of whom, either because they were returning to a human kill or by other signs, were recognizable as man-eaters, that the trouble ceased. It was almost certainly a family of man-eaters.

Only once have I encountered a man-eater, and it was a most alarming experience. Oddly enough I came into contact on that same day with a man-eating panther as

well as with a tiger; for that very afternoon I had found the corpse of a woman recently killed and the unmistakable pug-marks of the panther that had slain her. To search for him in the expanse of several square miles of high grass where the tragedy had occurred would have been hopeless. That night I was making my way to a distant police outpost. The path was narrow and full of holes, and it was pitch-dark. So, tired of slow riding, I dismounted and walked. I had to pass through a depression where the track descended into dense jungle and grass some ten feet high. It was an unhealthy spot, known to be the haunt of a man-eater who had killed several wayfarers in the last few months. There were with me a syce leading the horse and a man carrying my rifle. I told the latter to load. Hardly had I done so when a mighty roar broke out within a few yards of us. I called to the men to shout and to the syce to wave a small hand-lamp which he had brought to avoid pitfalls. The tiger stood his ground and continued to give tongue; and the agitated grass in front of us seemed to forebode an imminent spring. I dared not fire into the grass; for a wound would have made the beast only the more dangerous. At last the light and the shouting proved too much for him and he sheered off grumbling angrily. We were all four horribly frightened, especially my mare, who was sweating with terror.

The second fallacy is that tiger shooting is always a glorious and thrilling sport. No doubt it is so in the north of the United Provinces on the Nepal border, where the game is ringed by staunch elephants, and the sportsmen, seated on the elephants, take their shots as the tiger plunges about in the circle seeking a way of escape. But where, as in the Central Provinces, there are no staunch elephants we had to depend on driving the tiger out with a line of beaters or sitting up for him at night. Both are slow and wearisome methods. In the former you sit up a tree on a

*machan*, maybe for hours, while the beaters are marshalled, the stops set, and other elaborate preliminaries arranged. You feel that you are being kept in ignorance and are entirely out of the job, while others are doing it. If it is the hot weather the sun beats between leafless twigs on your head, eye-flies blind you; and the slightest movement is prohibited. Stripes may be close at hand, and a mere flicker of your eyelids may betray your presence. Of course there is excitement when the beat at last begins. First comes the blare of the local band, intended to rouse the monarch of the jungle from his midday repose. But the sound of drums, trumpets and shawms dies away. Silence comes again. Then a gentle tapping on the trees shows that the beaters are approaching and trying by these subdued noises to coax the tiger forward to the line of rifles. There is a sound in the tree-tops; it is the monkeys swaying from bough to bough and loudly chattering. If the chattering is very loud and nervous it may mean that they see the tiger. Suddenly the eye is arrested by a peacock flying over; he is in full plumage, and his long tail, undulating and iridescent in the sunlight, is an engrossing sight. But the eye is quickly called to the ground again. For now there comes a suspicious rustling in the undergrowth, and every sense is strained. Is it the tiger? No; it is only Mrs. Peahen and her brood, or perhaps the Seven Sisters fussily hopping along; and your wrath is kindled against them. If the authentic monster does at last appear, you may have a close sitting shot, or he may pass like a flash, in which case you may miss him or wound him. Anyhow, you may be a party of three, four, or five rifles. Only one rifle generally gets the shot; the others have had a long and tiresome wait all for nothing. For nothing—unless the tiger has been wounded by the sportsman before whom he has emerged. It is a code of honour that a wounded tiger or panther must be

followed up and that every effort must be made to destroy an animal which, owing to the wound, may degenerate into a man-eater. Then indeed the excitement rises high, with more than a spice of danger. For, since there are here no staunch elephants, the following must be done on foot; and the wounded beast, hidden in brake or tufts of grass, well camouflaged among the flickering lights and shadows of the jungle, has far the best of the chances. It is in the following-up that not a few of my friends have perished or received grievous injury.

But it may well be that, as the beaters approach the rifles, a sudden outcry and scuffle proclaim that stripes, wary and suspicious, has broken out behind; or the beaters may emerge with the news that the tiger had shifted ground and was not in the drive. Then the monotonous wait has been all in vain. Other animals may have come out before the rifles, but, if a tiger is expected, the shot must be reserved for him.

I shall presently speak of a night spent in sitting up over a tiger's kill. It is dull enough work when the weather is warm, much worse when it is cold. Once after a long day's shooting in the jungle I came upon the body of a cow freshly killed by a tiger. There was a convenient tree close by. I climbed into it and sat there clad in light kit through the night. It froze. At dawn I was so stiff and chilled that I could hardly get down. Of course the tiger hadn't put in an appearance. On such occasions he seldom does.

Indeed, tiger shooting is full of disappointments. Even the most experienced shikaris and the most careful preparations may fail to produce the desired result. Once, when camping through a wild and rather inaccessible tract, I met two redoubtable sportsmen—the late Sir Frank Sly, afterwards Governor of the Central Provinces, and an engineer named Moss Harriott, whose death at the age of



eighty-five I saw announced many years afterwards in *The Times*. These two had had long spells of duty in this tiger-infested part of the country and, incredible as it sounds, had shot tigers much as in England one shoots rabbits, Sly being credited with more than a hundred and Moss Harriott with ninety-five. The Divisional Commissioner was also of the party. We moved along together by the one and only negotiable road. In that part of the country camels are not used, and our things were carried in bullock-carts. Half the carts went on by night, the cart-men slumbering in their vehicles, and the bullocks, who are gifted with good road-sense, going on without deviation or human guidance along the track. But one night something happened; and next morning the man in charge of one of my carts found on arriving at the camping-place that a spare bullock which had been tethered at the back of the cart was missing and the rope was snapped. He went back to investigate and found the body of the bullock in the ditch by the side of the road. The tigress (somehow or other the local people knew it was a female) had pounced upon the bullock as the long string of carts was passing, dragged the unfortunate creature into the ditch and there had eaten what she immediately required while the rest of the procession went by within a few yards of her. It was a piece of gross impertinence, which must be duly punished. Besides, here was an opportunity for Moss Harriott (who was on the point of retiring from India to take up a post in Mauritius) to get one more run towards his century. So it was decided to halt the next day; and an imposing drive was organized, with some two hundred beaters and three elephants. We four took up our stations; stops were placed; every precaution was observed; and the great semicircle of beaters began to move forward and close in towards the rifles. The total result of this immense endeavour was one hare. To make matters worse, this

*ridiculus mus* hopped round to each of the rifles, halted, sat up and did his best to cock a snook at him.

The whole affair was disappointing and undignified. But Sly would not admit defeat. His skill as a shikari and his intimate knowledge of the locality singled him out as the leader in these distressing circumstances. 'I think I can show you the tiger,' he said, turning to me—no doubt it was his kindly disposition that selected me, who was young and tigerless. 'We'll get on a pad. But keep your rifle cocked.' So he and I mounted one of the elephants, and he directed the mahout through the jungle and up a small hill. It looked almost like a case of instinct; for at that very moment the tigress was lying, couched in deep grass, on the top of that very hill. But an elephant trampling through undergrowth makes some noise, and just as we arrived the tigress slunk away in the thick stuff. There was her form in the grass, the dry blades, released from her weight, actually bending upwards again. And there was the strong, unmistakable smell of tiger. No wonder it was too much for the elephant. He pivoted round and tore down the hill and on through the jungle. Sly and I were clinging on to the slippery pad for dear life and clutching our cocked rifles. In such crises, even if you don't fall off of yourself, you may be swept off by a branch. For an elephant, clever as he is at avoiding such obstacles to his own progress, does not realize that the branches which clear his back do not necessarily clear his passengers' bodies. We were both thankful when, after a terrifying stampede, the elephant came to the conclusion that he had put a sufficient distance between himself and that nasty smell and yielded to the entreaties and endearments showered on him by his mahout.

Other kinds of calamity may spoil your sport. At the height of the hot weather I got news of two tigers in an unlikely spot not far from the station. I hurried out in the

evening and found the reason for their presence there—a tiny oasis formed of a pool lying in the shade of steep banks and overhanging trees, fresh and moist even in those scorching days of early June. There in the mud round the pool were the new pug-marks of two tigers, male and female. It was a refuge from the heat which, having once found, they would not willingly desert. It all looked so simple and easy; one at least of those tigers was surely doomed. I declared my intention of beating over the pool next morning. The local wiseacres, however, advised me first to have a quiet beat through a near-by bit of jungle where the animals would probably lie during the night and to reserve the pool for the hot midday. Local advice is generally sound; but on this occasion my acceptance of it proved my undoing. The jungle held no tiger, though it held plenty of other things. Sixteen quadrupeds came past me in the beat, including wild pig, hyenas, and a fine sambhar stag, all of which I let go in peace. We were just going down to beat over the pool when I descried away to the north-west something like a bank of pale cloud arising. I knew what that meant; and sure enough, swept forward and fanned by the hot wind, the dreaded fire came raging through the forest. With difficulty we cleared sufficient space to save my tent and effects. That night was the hottest I ever endured; I slept, or tried to sleep, in a tiny enclave surrounded by smouldering timber and undergrowth. Of course the tigers and every other denizen of the jungle had fled before the red terror.

Yet there comes now and again a lucky day, a day even of unexpected luck. I conclude with the story of such a day. The story is long, but so was the day.<sup>1</sup> At the end of May, when heat had prostrated one's office hands and brought work to a standstill, I could in some years steal

<sup>1</sup> A more complete version of this day's adventures appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, June 1924.

away for a few days to a certain delectable forest. It took two days to get to the forest, driving sixty miles the first day and riding the next with a relay of horses forty miles on a rough track which brought me in the evening to a ridge of hill overlooking a great circular valley isolated by a ring of uplands. In the valley are broad glades of tall grass intersected by strands of the lofty poplar-like Sal (*Shorea robusta*). This tree clothes itself, just when its fellows of the forest are scorched and leafless, with rich foliage of glistening green—a welcome contrast after the bleak desolation through which I had been journeying.

My object is deer stalking. It is a government forest, and I am restricted by rule to two swamp deer, two sambhar and two chital. Of course there is no restriction about tigers; but I am not after tigers. In four days I complete my allotted bag, save for one sambhar, and I have still one day before I must return. There are with me two trackers—aborigines named Phaganu and Chaitu. I take counsel with them about how to spend the last day. They say there is a well-known sambhar, the grandest of his tribe in all that jungle. But he has grown crafty, for many Sahibs have fired many bullets at him. I have learned to regard with deep suspicion these stories of monster beasts and many bullets. However, I decide to take their advice, which is to chance finding him in the early morning somewhere near a salt-lick which he frequents.<sup>1</sup> As we start out at the customary hour, about 4 a.m., we hear a long snarling roar. There is no mistaking what that means. 'A kill', whispers Phaganu. But in the darkness we can do nothing. The tiger, having satisfied his hunger with a morsel, may return in the evening or the night. I tell a syce to take a horse, when it is light enough, in the direction I am going, so that I can ride back fast and investigate

<sup>1</sup> Sitting up for deer by night over a salt-lick is very properly regarded as unsportsmanlike and is forbidden in government forests.

the kill. It will be a case of sitting up over it; for there are no beaters to be had in this uninhabited region.

Our journey to the salt-lick, about four miles distant, is delayed by minor occurrences. The sun is just peeping over the horizon when we reach our destination. The lick is a great mound of salt-laden earth, excavated like a quarry by the feet and tongues of countless generations of beasts. We scout around. There sure enough, some two hundred yards away, half concealed in high grass and scrub, stands the big sambhar with three hinds. The hinds are suspicious and fidget about in front of the stag. I have to take a long shot in uncertain light, peering through grass and avoiding the hinds. I miss. The animals plunge into bamboo cover. I race for a little eminence, whence I can get a view. The bamboos are impenetrable, too thick for even the nimble deer to negotiate. They come tearing back. I get in a snap shot. The stag jinks into dense jungle which clothes the side of a hill. I make for the point where he has disappeared. There is blood on the ground. The hill is part of the rim that girdles the valley. It rises some five hundred feet, is heavily cumbered with timber and breaks into rocks at the top. The prospect is too much for Phaganu and Chaitu. They vow that the hill is too steep, they will die of heat and thirst, the stag is only lightly hit. Nothing will move them. They indulge in a sit-down strike. I have to pursue the trail alone. It is slow and tiring work. At last I reach a place where the stag has obviously lain down. He must be pretty hard hit. Before me is a screen of bamboos. I decide to throw away caution and to charge through the screen in hope of getting another shot. At that moment the trackers crawl up behind me. To see me doing their work had shamed them. No time for apology or recrimination. I run forward, see the stag moving up among the topmost rocks and get a lucky shot on his spine. Phaganu and Chaitu, who receive any stag

I shoot and make it into biltong for their future sustenance, regretfully declare the beast too heavy to convey to camp. They cut off his head as a trophy. The antlers are massive, and each measures well over forty inches from base to tip.

We are tired and thirsty. There is nothing to drink—I have exhausted my flask of cold tea. A smoke would help. But no matches may be carried outside the camp area; for the timber is valuable, and a forest-guard is set over the camp to see that rules are observed. However, I always take a pouch with me. In two minutes we make fire with two bits of bamboo and a shred of tinder. A Sal leaf, twisted round, serves as pipe. We pass it to each other, inhale the fragrant weed, carefully bury the remnants and start campwards. We take turns carrying one or other of my two rifles and the stag's head. Having missed the horse, we trudge over shadeless glades under a fierce sun. We light on a small water-hole—slimy, green, semi-opaque. Clothes and all, we plunge in up to our necks. It is midday when we reach camp. After disposing of several bottles of soda-water and pots of tea, I manage to swallow a breakfast of bread and butter and rice-pudding.

Now for stripes! The forest guard has found the place where the kill took place. But the tiger had dragged his victim into dense jungle; and the forest guard, having no rifle, naturally hesitated to follow; for the tiger might be lying up close to the prey and dangerously resent intrusion. I give one rifle to the guard, who knows its use, and take the other myself. We carefully follow the drag (or *ghasita*, as it is called) and, after advancing rather more than half a mile, find the kill, a chital hind, lying in a spot surrounded by young Sal trees.

We retrace our steps and return carrying a *machan*—a frame made of light timber and rope, useful for such occasions. No tall tree being handy, we cannot tie the *machan* higher than a few feet from the ground, just

enough to give a clear view of the kill. We fix some small leafy boughs round it for concealment. Then the guard returns to the camp and I seat myself on the *machan*.

There is a chance that the tiger may come while there is still daylight. But sunset arrives without incident, and there will now be two anxious hours of darkness before the rising of the moon. If stripes puts in an appearance during those two hours, it will be a risky shot. I dine off sandwiches and cold tea. The meal is not improved by the proximity of the kill; for in this climate decomposition takes place in a few hours, and throughout the night my nostrils are most unpleasantly assailed. One hour passes. Suddenly I hear the unmistakable call of a tiger. It comes from a low hill on the north. Bad luck! I shall have to take a shot in the dark. The call is repeated, but no nearer. I have my rifle ready and my eyes skinned. And then—no stealthy tread, no rustling of undergrowth. The forest relapses into awed silence. Stripes seems to have changed his mind. And now at last there is a faint glimmer behind me. Rays from the rising moon begin to filter through the branches. Objects in front of me take on shadowy forms. Every now and then I push out my trusty .500 express to make sure that the moonlight catches the night-sight. All remains silent. It is getting near eleven o'clock.

Then in a moment everything happens. A sullen blood-curdling snarl immediately behind me. Now it is right below me. The tiger has inconsiderately elected to approach the kill by a route which lies just under my *machan*. His back threatens to brush against my posterior, and that might give rise to a serious misunderstanding. But he gets through without a collision—it must have been a matter of inches—and emerges below me in deep shadow. Without a pause he advances out of shadow into the little open space where the kill is lying, and I can see his out-

line. But, with his stern towards me, he presents no vital shot. Then he seizes the carcass in his jaws and, most fortunately, swings round facing me and begins to back, dragging the kill along with him. I must take the shot at once; for he will soon be hidden in the thick scrub on the other side of the open space. I take aim. But, during the few minutes since I had last tested the visibility of the night-sight, the rising moon has reached a position where a bunch of leaves is interposed between her rays and the sight. The muzzle of the rifle is in shadow, and I cannot aim with any accuracy. I am not one of those who can boast of rapid thought and action—very much the reverse; and my quickness of decision on that night has always been a matter of surprise to me. I whipped out a white handkerchief, knotted it over the night-sight and, allowing for the high sight thus formed, fired at the tiger's head. There followed an instant of anxiety; for a shot at night is always a bit of a chance, and much more so with an improvised sight, and there was the uncomfortable possibility that the next moment might find stripes sharing the *machan*. However, there was no roar; and my mind was switched off from the fear of an attack by a new and urgent predicament. A corner of my handkerchief, hanging down over the muzzle of the rifle, had caught fire. Oddly enough, this danger had flashed into my mind as I knotted the handkerchief; and the combination of a fire in the dry undergrowth caused by the fall of burning material and a wounded tiger obstructing my efforts to avert a major conflagration presented an involved problem. Had I had more time to think, it might have occurred to me that the sight of fire would induce even a wounded tiger to get as far away from it as possible. I quickly pulled in the rifle and quenched the flames with moist leaves. This danger removed, I was free to attend to the tiger. He was lying motionless before me. But he might be merely suffering



from concussion. So, aiming as far as I could judge at his heart, I gave him the second barrel.

It was now nineteen hours since I rose in the morning, and much of this time had been passed in devastating heat and strenuous exertion. So I lay down on the *machan* and composed myself to rest. But it was not to be. For now occurred an incident more remarkable than any which I had encountered during those crowded hours. That call which I had heard in the early part of the night rang out again from the hill away to the north. Instantly I sit up and look. *My* tiger is lying there, still dead. So this is a second tiger; and the call is coming nearer, rapidly nearer. Can it be the mate? Anyway, it is without doubt a tiger, and it is apparently attracted by the shots and hastening to investigate—a strange proceeding on the part of a tiger, who is not normally of an inquisitive nature but only too anxious to get away from anything startling. Now the mate, if indeed it is she, is close at hand. The moon is riding high and the light is good. There seems a fair chance that I may finish up the night with two tigers. But no such luck. For some reason, perhaps the smell of blood or of powder, the beast hesitates to come into the open and remains invisible. Then she begins to circle round me. This is embarrassing; for behind me and to right and left there is no open space, only thick foliage and high grass, and the light is faint and uncertain there. If she were bent on mischief, she could be on me before I could draw a bead on her. She keeps padding round me with ominous Brobdingnagian purrings and mewings, while I twist and turn on the *machan* and try to keep the rifle trained on the spot whence comes the noise. And thus, hour after hour, the sleepless night passes in high-strung expectation. And then at last the false dawn dulls the stars, whereupon she gives a baffled roar and moves grumbling away into the forest, her voice growing fainter as it fades



*Six Days' Shooting in the Sal Forests*



Up the hillside; and now 'tis buried deep  
In the next valley-glades.

And I shake myself and ask: Was it a vision or a waking dream?

The false dawn dies. Night resumes her sway. The birds, deceived into premature song, fall silent again. But now the true dawn breaks. A stag bells in the distance. Stealthy sounds creep through the early quiet, as the beasts get them away together to their lairs. I step down from my perch. No; it was no vision, no waking dream. There lies a splendid tiger—nearly eleven feet he measured when we got him to the camp. And round about my hiding-place are the tracks of the second beast, crushed grass, broken twigs and her pug-marks in a patch of sand. I fire three rounds in quick succession—the preconcerted signal that all is clear and that no wounded beast lies in ambush. I sit down on the ground and contemplate the scene. The daylight comes pleasantly and the bright Sal leaves glisten as they greet the rising sun. It all seems so peaceful. But the mangled body of the chital hind tells of the jungle life of tooth and claw; and the dead slayer is himself the victim of the primitive instincts of man.

There is a shout. The men are coming. I call back that all is well. Presently they appear—the forest-guard armed with my spare rifle, Phaganu and Chaitu and others from the camp. Exclamations of delight on seeing the tiger. He is trussed up on a pole and we start in procession towards the camp. My thoughts dwell with agreeable anticipation upon quarts of tea, buttered toast, and a tub. It is eight o'clock when we arrive. It has been a long day—twenty-eight hours—and a very good one.

## *Chapter VIII*

### AMPHIBIOUS LIFE

'**T**IS a far cry from the Central Provinces to the eastern districts of Bengal. It was to Eastern Bengal and Assam that I was suddenly transferred early in 1906. I was bitterly grieved to leave a part of India to which I had become deeply attached and the many good friends I had made there. Moreover the prospect of E. B. and A. was alarming. I should be among the Bengalis, who were folk of a kind very different from what I had hitherto encountered and were generally held to be out for making trouble. The welcome accorded to me by one of their leading Calcutta papers as 'this mischievous importation from the jungles of the Central Provinces' was not encouraging. At the moment the situation was complicated by the fierce agitation against the partition of Bengal; and that would make more difficult the task which faced me, which was not merely the superintendence but, so far as possible, the radical improvement, of 32,000 educational institutions depressed through neglect and lack of necessary funds.

My physical surroundings, too, were entirely changed. Instead of broad expanses of wheat-field backed by flat-topped, forest-clad hills, here were countless small patches of paddy mingled with great stretches of water. In fact one might say, like an Irishman, much of the land in the delta is water. In Assam indeed there are hills, and very pleasant hills. But my work lay mostly in the moist districts of Bengal. No more camels to carry the equipage. Transport is as much by boat as by cart; and a single journey often entails several changes—from railway to river-steamer, from steamer to horse or bicycle, thence to a sailing boat, and so on.

The railways in India are remarkably good and were in those days operated mainly by Anglo-Indians, who made admirable guards and drivers. It is to be hoped that a class to which not many avenues of employment are open will not be ousted from a type of career in which it has so well justified itself. Long journeys could be accomplished on the main lines in comfort and with punctuality. Branch lines are naturally less reliable. There is a story of an American who, impatient at the long delays at wayside stations, pointed indignantly to the cow-catcher and suggested to the guard that it should be removed to the rear of the coaches 'lest some cow catch up the train, ascend the cars and bite one of the passengers'. Yet even on such lines the train takes you to your destination eventually. But in Eastern Bengal a railway journey may be interrupted, the line terminating at a river-station—a tin structure set up in a field or on a mud-flat and apt to be removed some miles up or down the river to accord with changes in the channel or the banks caused by the annual flood. Nor, in branch lines, is this the only trouble. Once in Assam I had to leave the main line at a junction where it was joined by a small narrow-gauge line which was proudly called a State Railway. There stood the little train and the little engine. But engine and station were both lifeless. I managed to find the station-master, a placid Bengali, who informed me that the boiler was burst. Examination of the boiler, which was of the exposed type, showed this to be all too true. When I asked what they proposed to do about it, they said they were going to mend the cracks with mud. This mending was done in a leisurely fashion, the furnace was stoked and the train declared ready to start. I felt no confidence in the mud; and, sure enough, after the engine had wheezily and spasmodically jerked over a hundred yards, there was a splutter and a rush of steam and we came to a standstill. I then ascertained that the

line boasted one other engine, and my suggestion that it would be well to telegraph for it was, with some surprise at its audacity, adopted. A few days afterwards I was returning by the same line to catch the one mail train that passed daily, when the engine jumped the track and it took so long to jack it up that I had the mortification of seeing the distant smoke of the mail-train as it reached and left the junction, slept that night on a bench on the platform and lost a whole day. I avoided that railway ever after.

In Assam, said to be the rainiest country in the world, the railroads are frequently threatened by floods. In the hilly parts it is no uncommon experience to find yourself turned out of your carriage at dead of night and told you have to cross a wash-out or a land-slide to another train that awaits you on the other side. Soon after a new line was constructed north of the Brahmaputra to a point opposite Gauhati, I embarked on it for a night journey into Bengal. I was warned not to undress for bed, because we should have to transfer ourselves to a second train at a place where the line was breached. Time went on and nothing happened. So I fell asleep, but without undressing. I was awakened by a loud noise and, looking out, was just able to discern that it was due to the carriage wheels churning through water. A second time I was awakened by the same noise. Dawn had now begun to break, and I again saw that we were ploughing through a waste of water—but this time backwards, in the opposite direction. We were, in fact, crossing the Manas river, which, rushing down swollen from the hills, had submerged the bridge. After the train had crossed the bridge the first time, the guard, seeing nothing but water ahead, had deemed it unsafe to proceed and had sent the train back over the bridge—just in time; for the bridge collapsed immediately afterwards and none could have been saved

in that swirling flood. The line remained closed for many months.

The moist conditions of the country affect high and low alike. I once had to visit a town in lower Assam to inquire into a question of land acquisition. This involved a broken journey, partly by rail and partly by boat. So, to avoid the risk of taking a horse, I asked the I.C.S. officer in charge of the sub-division to send a horse to the station, whence I should have to go some seven miles by road. This he kindly did; and, on leaving the station in the early morning, I started the ride. But no sooner had I got into the open country than I saw that there was nothing before me but an inland sea. In a land liable to flood, the roads are raised on banks of a considerable height. There was now nothing to show where were the edges of the bank; and any deviation would have plunged horse and rider into deep water. So I threw the reins over the horse's neck and trusted to his instinct. He splashed his way unerringly over the uncharted expanse and we reached our destination. Here all the houses were more or less submerged. I met an inhabitant wading along the street and asked the direction to the officer's house. 'That's his house,' he replied, pointing to a one-storied bungalow built of wooden uprights, mashed bamboos and grass, which stood in about four feet of water. 'But the Sahib is living in a nest on a tree a little farther down the road.' I found the tree; and there, protruding from a hole in a sort of large bee-hive, was the face of the officer. He was on the look-out for me and showed me how I could dismount on to a little wooden platform, while the horse was led away to some place above the water-level. From the platform I climbed a ladder, entered the bee-hive and found the officer and his family installed there and quite unconcerned by their surroundings. 'It happens like this every year and we're used to it,' he explained. And presently there appeared from



another bee-hive an excellent breakfast of eggs and bacon and hot coffee.

The peasants regard these annual floods with equal composure. Travelling by train, I have seen, even in the northern part of the delta, no vestige of land except a few heaped up mounds on to which the villagers drive their cattle and there leave them with a supply of fodder sufficient for their needs during the probable period of the inundation. They themselves desert their submerged homes and take to boats. It is just a yearly event. Farther south a big fraction of the population have no dwelling at all on land but live permanently on their boats, doing a brisk trade in the carriage of rice and jute and supporting themselves largely on fish, which are easily caught and excellent.

Thus the people share the amphibious nature of their land. The children seem capable of swimming almost from birth. If the lads of one village have to go to another to school, and the villages are connected by a channel, it is no uncommon sight to see a regular flotilla of large earthen pots, each pot manned and paddled by a school-boy, his books tucked under his legs. They race each other with shouts of laughter and attempt bumps. If one or other of the pots, bumper or bumped, goes to pieces, the occupant accomplishes the rest of the journey swimming, with his books held up in one hand. In fact, travel by water is more sure and comfortable than by land, though it also has its inconveniences. The formation of the beds of the great rivers constantly changes; hidden sandbanks come into being almost overnight; and passengers may find themselves grounded on one of these for several days. Again, cyclones of great violence occur and may wreck even a large vessel. I have seen, after such a storm, big steamers capable of carrying a thousand passengers piled up on the banks and left high and dry.

Where transport is difficult, evasion becomes easy. This accounts for the frequency of dacoities in the delta districts. The criminal who has carefully laid his plans can cover his tracks by changes from bicycle to boat, &c.; water holds no trail. During the agitation over the partition many outrages took place, and the pursuit of the malefactors was made difficult by the nature of the country.

The hill districts of Assam contain some delightful places. How glorious was an early morning ride over the rolling downs that surround Shillong! Away to the north, across the Brahmaputra valley, gleams the snowy top of Kinchenjunga. Suddenly at our feet opens a little ravine. It, like the distant mountain, seems to be clothed in snow; but here it is the snowy blossoms of the wild azalea. And here and there in odd corners and patches of forest are found flowers and ferns that remind us of our native heath—harebells, bracken and stag's horn moss, but all, by reason of the damper and warmer climate, shaped on a larger scale. And what a field for gardening was there! A runlet of water, embedded in maidenhair fern, could be carried round the lawn. In any moist spot Arum lilies grew as though wild. Hydrangeas put forth giant blossoms, all of the coveted blue. Cannas and chrysanthemums flourish exceedingly and exhibit rare and delicate hues.

A disadvantage of these hills is the frequency of earthquakes following on the catastrophe of 1897, when there was immense loss of life and property. But the danger has now been minimized by the adoption of a very perfect type of earthquake-proof house. This consists of a stout timber frame, sufficiently elastic to withstand even a violent shock. The walls form no part of the structure but are mere panels, made of a kind of reed (*ekra*) found in the Brahmaputra; and the roofs are of thatch or of corrugated iron. In more important government buildings the

framework is of steel and the panels of expanded metal or some such light and durable material. These houses, with darkened beams and whitewashed walls, have a charming appearance externally, and the internal surface will take wallpaper just as well as though built of masonry or cement.

The inhabitants of these hills are attractive—Mongoloid in face, lively, cheerful and gifted with good voices and an ear for music. This gift has been developed by the missionaries. The Khasis in their native state were worshippers of the spirits of the tree, the rock, the river and so forth, each of which spirits, unless propitiated (sometimes by human sacrifice), would send fire, plague, earthquake and other disasters. When I went to Assam, the Welsh Calvinist Mission, with headquarters at Liverpool, had firmly established itself among these people and had converted a large proportion to Christianity. Mr. and Mrs. Jones or Mr. and Mrs. Evans settle down for a good spell of their lifetime in a village, build a chapel and, in addition to spiritual instruction, introduce material and artistic blessings in the shape of the little black pig, the potato and beautiful music.

It is in these hills that Cherrapunji is situated, the place which is said to have the heaviest rainfall in the world—an annual average of nearly 450 inches. (Some say that a wetter spot has been discovered and that Cherra is dispossessed of this notoriety.) At certain times of the year the rain descends almost in a solid mass—if one can call water solid. I have seen as much as 32 inches recorded in 24 hours. And yet, though I have often visited Cherra, I have never seen rain there. On the other hand I have found it raining heavily on six out of fourteen occasions when I have put in at Aden. It is just a matter of the season of the year and of chance. The journey from the southern, or Surma, valley of Assam up into the hills via



*Local Chiefs in the Assam Hills*



Cherra was a favourite trip of mine, because it meant one day of fresh air, exercise, and freedom from toil in a life that was all too laborious. The approach to the foot of the hills had generally to be made by water, inundations being of common occurrence, and was accomplished by night—first in a steamer, then in a large row-boat. If the flood is high, the boatmen, in order to get the craft through the fiercer swirls, pull it along by clinging to the bushes which rise above the water and whose large white blossoms gleam like friendly beacons through the darkness. Finally, as dawn breaks, we tranship to canoes, and all, myself included, plunge into the water and push them up the rapids. The cool water is a pleasant tonic in the stifling hothouse atmosphere of that valley. The hills are now close above us, a five thousand foot scarp clothed with trees. We reach the scarp. A hasty breakfast, and we begin the ascent. There is a graded road, paved with flags of stone—no other surface could resist the torrential rains; owing to the steepness of the scarp it winds interminably. But there is also a footpath, rising at a sharp angle, which is much shorter. Up this I go, accompanied by a couple of coolies carrying some warm clothes and a bottle of beer. It is a stiff pull up that path, and we are soon drenched with sweat. But I know of a little waterfall on the left-hand side which forms a cool and convenient shower-bath. I leave the path and seat myself, in my clothes, under the waterfall. The water makes neither me nor my clothes any wetter than they were before; but it freshens me up. The coolies roar with laughter at my action, but see the force of it and, when I am thoroughly soaked and vacate the bath, scramble down and occupy it. Reinvigorated, we mount higher and now realize that what had looked from below like a jungle is in fact a mighty orange grove mingled with jack-fruit and other trees from which hang long tassels of golden orchid, while the ground

is thick with pineapples and the air with bright tropical butterflies. Gradually we ascend into a lower temperature. Huge chasms, torn in the mountain side, open to right and left, and cataracts pour from dark cornices of rock above. The summit is reached. And what a prospect! The hillside which we have just ascended plunges below, seamed with torrent-riven ravines cut through slopes deeply velveteed with dense foliage. Beyond the scarp stretches a vast plain, turned by the flood into an inland sea from which emerge villages raised on mounds and the elevated banks of rivers. To the south this plain is bounded by the blue line of the Lushai hills. The bottle of beer now comes in handy; and I am glad of the warm clothes and a good fire when we reach the little town. Next morning a ride of thirty miles brings me to Shillong in time for breakfast.

But not all the hill journeys are so pleasant. I was asked by the Superintendent of the Naga Hills to visit and inspect his charge. This tract, lying between Assam and Burma, presents physical difficulties, which proved tragically serious when a mass of refugees poured through it before the Japanese invasion of 1942, notwithstanding that it was then pierced by a metalled road. At the time of my visit there was only a corduroy road, over which transport was almost hopeless in any but dry weather. It is also an inhospitable region. Villages along the road are few and so primitive that no sort of supplies are obtainable. The Nagas themselves are renowned as head-takers. Head-taking is not permitted in those parts which have come under British administration. But even there watchfulness is necessary against the surreptitious acquisition of a scalp—the getting of a human head being regarded as a condition of full manhood; and beyond the border of the administered territory it is (or at least then was) the practice of the inhabitants to swoop down upon their

neighbours when engaged in their lawful occupations and deprive them of their heads. On such occasions the slaughter is indiscriminate; and I have seen cloaks lined with the tresses of murdered women.

I had arranged for carts and a few porters to meet me at the railway station where the road into the Naga country commences. It was the time of year when dry weather might be expected. But an unseasonable down-pour had turned the corduroy road into deep mud, and the tree-trunks of which it was constructed sank down into the mud as soon as trodden upon. I found I was to have travelling companions—a Major Tregear and his wife and two small children, who were on their way to join his regiment in Manipur.<sup>1</sup> Arriving at the station (euphemistically called Manipur Road, though distant about a hundred miles from Imphal, the capital of Manipur), we waded knee-deep in mud to the rest-house, a two-roomed bungalow, which proved to be already occupied by the sub-divisional officer, his wife, children and sister-in-law. There was no other place of shelter. So the women and children slept in the bed-room and the men of the party on the floor of the sitting-room. Next morning the Tregears started early and we sent off the carts. I had two

<sup>1</sup> The Indian State of Manipur became prominent in the public eye during the frontier operations against the Japanese in 1944. It had earned a tragic notoriety in 1891. A palace intrigue had resulted in the deposition of the rightful ruler. The Chief Commissioner of Assam went with a force to regularize the affairs of the State. He was attacked and, when he and four other officers, civil and military, entered the palace under an armistice to negotiate, they were all treacherously murdered. The chief delinquent was subsequently caught and executed. The murdered Chief Commissioner, Mr. Quinton, had as his personal bearer a Muslim of the name of Faizu. Faizu afterwards entered the service of a R.E. officer, who was engaged in constructing a telegraph line in the Lushai hills. This officer also was murdered by lawless Lushais. Faizu then entered my service, and I wondered whether I should be the third victim. But I survived; and Faizu proved one of the best and most loyal of the good and loyal servants who helped to make life so pleasant in India.



horses with me, so stayed till the afternoon to examine some curious ruins in the neighbourhood, which are one of the very few relics left of the powers that once ruled in Assam. But I had under-estimated the delaying influence of mud. I found the carts hopelessly bogged only a couple of hundred yards on their way and the state of the road such that riding would have meant the laming of the horses. So I dismounted and walked, taking a rifle with me—a necessary precaution, since the track led through the Nambhor forest, notorious for rogue elephants. Towards evening I caught up the Tregears. Mrs. Tregear and the children were travelling in a cart. Tregear himself, also armed with a rifle, was trudging beside it. It was dark before we reached the first rest-house. All our things, bedding, change of linen, food, were far behind in the carts. It was here that my porters came in handy. Foreseeing trouble, I had sent two along with a few loaves of bread and some bottles of beer and stout. On this fare we subsisted for four days. No food was to be obtained along the route. Tregear and I would take our guns in the evening; but hope of getting any game was vain. The jungle was so thick on either side of the track that no self-respecting bird or beast deemed it fit for habitation. Even had there been anything to shoot, the noise of our approach would have disturbed it; for a man had to go ahead cutting a way with his kukri. The only living things we saw were creatures that love darkness better than light—large tree-leeches, which clung to our ears and cheeks as we brushed through the thick foliage and must be pulled off quickly lest they make a sore, and a few bats which we shot near the villages. We invited the children of these villages, which appeared to contain only the slenderest means of subsistence, to take the bats for food. They refused, but, as soon as our backs were turned, fell upon them. After all, there is no reason why bats shouldn't be good to eat;

and the big bats, called flying foxes, which are common in India, are quite edible. The only birds we saw were a few flocks of the magnificent greater hornbill. These were always flying in a straight line and at a great height. They haunt the large timber higher up in the hills. Their long black and white tail feathers are worn by the Naga braves as a part of their war-paint. The people we met along the road were of primitive type and included a number of the Kuki tribe, who are the only folk I have come across who entirely dispense with clothing.

On the evening of the fourth day we arrived at a rest-house in a village called Piphima. The very name seemed to forebode an evil smell. And an evil smell there was. We investigated and found that it proceeded from the decayed body of a sick cow which had inconsiderately selected the veranda of the rest-house as a suitable place in which to give up the ghost. No one had troubled to remove it. With some difficulty we got it taken away. To cheer us up, another of my porters arrived, carrying a small luncheon sausage, of which the five of us quickly disposed, a loaf of stale bread and two eggs. I took Tregear aside and said that, if he didn't think it desertion, I would leave them the loaf and eggs, start off early next morning, ride the remaining two stages into Kohima, the Superintendent's headquarters, and send them some food. This plan seemed feasible because the road had dried up to some extent and, now that we had reached the higher slopes of the hills, the water had drained off more rapidly than below. Tregear welcomed the suggestion. I sent one horse forward a stage, and, setting out before dawn, was able to arrive at Kohima in good time. I got a cart full of provisions dispatched at once down the road to my companions on the journey.

Having proceeded thus far into the Naga country, I am tempted to complete the narrative of that trip. The

Superintendent told me with apologies that he must leave me for a few days to my own devices, since he was compelled to go away with a small force on a punitive expedition against a distant village whose inhabitants had made away with an alleged witch in the manner locally observed for dealing with witches, namely by treading her to death. He proposed that I should employ the time in making a little tour, and he placed at my disposal a civilized Naga who had learned English. It would be impossible, he said, to use a horse; so we must make the tour on foot. I found this Naga a good travelling companion, and we were quite pleased with one another, except that, on our return, he complained to the Superintendent that I walked too fast and too far. We visited a number of villages. I was surprised by the Nagas' skill in cultivation. Large streams had been diverted and carried along high up on the steep sides of narrow valleys, the slopes below had been terraced, and rice and the millet known as Job's tears (*Coix lachrima*) flourished on the level spaces formed by the terracing and irrigated from the streams above. These crops provide both food and drink. Beer is made from the rice and the millet. It is the traditional and national drink of the Nagas. Sometimes, peeping over the stockade which guards the Naga's home, we would see the brave seated among his women-folk and peacefully employed in quaffing beer out of a hollow bamboo which serves him as a tankard. To maintain an adequate thirst he has little iron spoons clamped to his fingers, out of which he every now and then takes a nibble at a concoction of fried snails, chillies and oil.

Among other places that we visited was Khonoma, once the scene of a battle. For some years previous to 1880 the Nagas gave much trouble, massacred British officers and made themselves a general nuisance. Punitive expeditions were sent against them. In 1879 a force of Indian troops

under British officers stormed Khonoma, which is quite a formidable stronghold situated on the top of a steep ridge, while the mountain of Jappho towers above to a height of 8,000 feet. Some of the British officers were killed in the attack. I assume that they were buried under the large stone flags with which the main street of the village is paved. For on those flags their names are roughly incised in big Sanskrit (Deva Nagri) characters. One could picture the sepoys cutting those letters with their bayonets as a memorial to the alien officers who had perished in leading them up that long ascent. It so happened that the government, remembering this long-forgotten fight, had just before my arrival raised a small marble monument on the summit of the village fort, commemorating the names of those fallen officers. The Naga braves were immensely pleased by this recognition of the foes whom their forefathers had slain in combat, and were delighted when I photographed them grouped round the monument, their only regret being that they had not had sufficient notice of my coming to allow them to don their fighting kit. That was just as it should be and showed an admirable spirit in those who had been on the losing side, while it was also a testimonial to the gallantry and the toleration displayed by the conquerors. But to my mind it was in those rude inscriptions, those Anglo-Saxon names carved in an eastern script, that the interest and the wonder lay—a microscopic glimpse into the strangely woven strands of history.

I was much impressed by the civilized manners of my Naga companion on this trip and by his good knowledge of English. Some two years afterwards I met my friend the Superintendent and he gave me the following account of him. 'You remember that nice Naga interpreter who said you walked too fast up the hills? Well, soon after you had gone away some villages broke out and started

raiding. I had to take troops to restore order. The people resisted and there was a little battle. When it was over, your Naga, whom I had taken with me as an orderly, came to the hut where I was working, pulled out a human head and proudly plumped it on the table. The old Adam had come out in him. While the battle was in progress he had espied a hostile Naga, engaged him in single combat behind a bush, killed him and cut off his head. He was as pleased as Punch at having got a scalp and couldn't at all understand it when I pointed out that, since he was a non-combatant, his action could not be regarded as an incident of war but amounted to murder and ought to be punished accordingly. But of course it was impossible in the circumstances to do more than give him a good dressing-down.'

## *Chapter IX*

### THE BENGALI

THE Bengali has had a raw deal. He has been much misjudged. For he carries his shortcomings on his sleeve, confesses them, even praises them, while his virtues are either locked in his heart or revealed only to those with whom he is intimate. It used to be the fashion to poke fun at him as 'the Bayard of Bengal'. In more recent years he gained an unenviable reputation as a perpetual agitator. This reputation was increased by certain occurrences which, however loath I am to revive the memory of far-off melancholy things, must be briefly recounted because they cast a shadow over Bengal during the time I served there and explain several personal experiences which I ought to mention as illustrative of the Bengali character. I refer to what is known as the Anti-Partition Agitation.

The reasons which led Lord Curzon to carry through the partition of Bengal were the unwieldy size of the province as then constituted, the necessity of introducing more efficient administration in the eastern districts where the King's writ hardly ran, and the desirability of separating from western Bengal an area which contained a substantial majority of Muslims who could not hold their own against the better educated and more nimble-witted Hindus. A new province was therefore created, comprising the eastern districts of Bengal and Assam, with its capital at Dacca.

Naturally a change which 'cut Mother Bengal in two' came as a shock to the Hindus—a shock all the more strongly felt in Calcutta because vested interests were there threatened. The Muslims, on the other hand,

hailed it with enthusiasm, since it held out to them the prospect of gaining the position in the public life of the eastern districts to which their numbers entitled them but of which Hindu ascendancy had hitherto deprived them; and, despite persecution and violence, they gave such support as they could to the new administration, and were heartened when Lord Morley, then Secretary of State for India, declared that the partition was a settled fact and would never be undone. The Hindus, incited by vocal emissaries from Calcutta, organized an agitation which progressed from attacks on the platform and in the newspaper to pistols and bombs. The situation lent a pretext and an opportunity for a revival of anarchism, which spread over other parts of India but found specially favourable material in Bengal, where subdivision of estates, the growing prosperity of the cultivators, increased cost of living and a glut of candidates for the black-coated professions had produced among the middle class a large body of malcontents who were as tinder to the torch of the demagogue.

Many murders were committed during this agitation, the fury of the anarchists being directed against loyal Indians, especially against the Indian police, who behaved with splendid courage. Some attacks were also made upon Europeans, of which the following is a typical example. My friend Mr. Basil Allen was going on leave. In the course of his journey from Dacca to Calcutta, while he was changing by night from steamer to railway at the river station of Goalundo, a youth came up behind him and shot him in the back with a .450 revolver at a distance of only one foot. The assassin fired at his pursuers and got away in the dark. Allen had to be taken on to Calcutta in the train—a night's journey. It was a marvel that he survived. He had been a running blue at Oxford and always kept up his exercise and his

health; perhaps it was partly to this that he owed his life. (He recovered to live, minus a lung, for nearly thirty years.)

There was a curious little sequel to this event. Two days after it business took me to Calcutta. The only other first-class passenger on the steamer was a Bengali official. Our talk was naturally about Allen's chances of recovery, which his friends in Dacca regarded as very small. About 11 p.m. we disembarked at Goalundo. The Bengali made his way over the roughly laid lines, under the flares that here and there flickered through the darkness, to a local train, which was due to leave before the express for Calcutta. I followed to where he stood at the door of his compartment and, before saying good-bye, asked him whether he knew where Allen was standing when he was shot. 'He was standing', he said, 'where you are now standing and was talking to So-and-so Babu just as you are talking to me. A man came up behind him disguised as a peasant, just as that man is coming up behind you——' I turned round to find it was as he said. The fellow was wrapped in a rough cloak and otherwise disguised (save for one fatal flaw which roused my suspicion) as a countryman. 'Who are you?' I asked sharply in Bengali. 'Sir,' he replied in English, 'I am detective.' 'Then,' I said, 'the next time you go out detecting and disguised, you'd better leave your silk socks and suspenders at home.' The Bengali has a passion for black silk socks, which, with their suspenders, make a brave show below the edge of the *dhoti*.

This happened at an early stage of the agitation, which subsequently gained fresh impetus through the removal (the circumstances attending the acceptance of his resignation warrant the use of that word) of the first Lieutenant-Governor of the new province. Sir Bampfylde Fuller had been opposed to the partition, but was



selected to carry out the policy which, despite his own disapproval of it, the Government of India had adopted. An able administrator, of unimpeachable integrity, imbued with strong humanitarian instincts and a burning zeal against injustice and oppression, and finally an accomplished linguist, he handled the task with such tact and firmness that he broke the back of the agitation in Eastern Bengal. Many of those who had most strongly opposed the government began to change their views. Then came catastrophe. Fuller had taken certain action in a flagrant case of violence. The action was within his powers; it was the proper action to take and it was the mildest possible in so serious a matter. The Government of India objected to it and asked him to withdraw. He pointed out that such withdrawal would render his position untenable and said that, rather than thus stultify himself, he would resign.<sup>1</sup> The higher powers, acting under some strange obsession, accepted his resignation and soon afterwards issued an order recommending, in similar cases, the very action which Fuller had adopted and to which they had taken exception.

So far as Eastern Bengal and the question of partition were concerned, the agitation had already waned; and, if the flames of the far more dangerous anarchist movement had not been fanned by Fuller's downfall, hailed as it was as a victory by the advocates of lawlessness, the disorders which ensued might have been largely avoided. Some of the politicians had already told me that they had found agitation good fun but were getting tired of it. The Hindus of Eastern Bengal had begun to see that they had won much more than they had lost through their separation from Calcutta, that their districts, hitherto financially starved, were now getting a fair share of

<sup>1</sup> An account of this incident is given in Lord Morley's *Recollections*, vol. ii, p. 184.

public funds, and that, though the interests of the Muslims were safeguarded, no undue favouritism was being shown to them. A well-known lawyer of Dacca, who had played a leading part in the agitation, had refused to have any dealings with the officials of the new province and had even defended and fêted political murderers, came to see me one day and surprised me by saying that he heartily approved of the partition. I knew he had no axe to grind; for he was a wealthy man, now well stricken in years, and had no need to seek for favours. 'We are going ahead,' he declared. 'We are getting our fair share of public funds. Our institutions, which were so badly starved and sordid, are being put on a proper footing. We have our own Legislative Council and can make our own laws. I am not yet a member of it' (he smiled, remembering his days of non-co-operation), 'but I hope to be a member soon. I now see that I can come and talk freely to you and other officers, whereas formerly the bigger officials were all far away in Calcutta. I am quite pleased with the new province.' 'Then', I broke in, 'why on earth are you still one of the few remaining irreconcilables who persist each October in putting their signatures to the Anti-Partition Manifesto which appears in the Calcutta newspapers?' 'I will tell you truly,' he replied. 'But you must keep what I say a secret.' I have no hesitation in divulging now what he said; for the old man must long ago have gone to his rest. And what he said was this: 'I don't believe in it; but if I didn't sign they'd shoot me dead.'

The partition was undone and Mother Bengal was joined together again. This change was part of a greater scheme—the establishment of a governorship in Bengal, the resurrection of Delhi as the capital of India, and more besides. It was announced at the great Durbar held at Delhi in December 1911. Immediately after the Durbar

I went to Calcutta. There I found myself besieged by visitors from Eastern Bengal, who wanted to know all about the changes and what I thought of them. One of them, a quick-witted Hindu from Dacca and a relative of one of those whose conduct had resulted in his deportation, was among the questioners. 'All that *I* have to tell you', I said, 'can be read in the papers. *You* come from the storm-centre. What are the Hindus of Dacca saying?' 'Do you want to hear the truth?' he asked. I said I did. 'Then I will tell you. The Hindus of Dacca are weeping and wringing their hands.' 'But surely,' I laughed, 'that's rather silly of them, seeing that now they've got what they've been agitating for all this time.' 'Ah!' he said, 'we Bengalis thought we could agitate with impunity. We have discovered our mistake.'

It should be realized that the Bengali is not to be judged in the light of the events just narrated. For he was then abnormal, upset, as a sentimental and impulsive race can easily be upset, by what he was taught to regard as an outrage on his nationality. Moreover, an important section of the population was suffering from acute economic depression; and the anarchist outrages were the work of a few fanatics and degenerates. Let us now consider the Bengali in his normal condition.

The two main faults attributed to the Bengali are cowardice and lack of practical ability. The former charge, in so far as it relates to physical courage, is false. There are physical cowards in all races. Their proportion is probably no greater among Bengalis than elsewhere. The idea may have sprung in part from the fact that the Bengali is quiet, peaceable and easy-going. But when aroused to face danger he is capable of displaying tenacity and courage. Kipling knew this. His Hurree Babu may confess himself 'a fearful man', but he is also 'good enough Herbert Spencerian to meet little thing like death',

and is ready 'to endure cold, pinch-belly, bad words and occasional blows' in company with his honoured employers. Thus he cloaks his sterling qualities under a humorous and amiable mixture of self-depreciation and self-laudation. Where the Bengali often fails is in moral courage. He lives in terror of what may be said about him in the Press or on the platform. This sensitiveness to criticism explains lapses which are sometimes almost incredible. I was on terms of close intimacy with the editor of a journal and esteemed him highly. He conducted his paper loyally and honestly at a time when it was the fashion to hurl against government false and fantastic charges of obliquity and oppression. As a result the circulation of his paper diminished. But he carried on undaunted. One morning he came to see me and have a chat, as he often did. Now if you are fairly well acquainted with a Bengali you know the sort of line his conversation will take. That morning my visitor's talk diverged so far from the usual and expected that it was clear he was embarrassed and beating about the bush. 'Basanta Babu,'<sup>1</sup> I said, 'you are not talking naturally to-day. You have something on your mind which you hesitate to tell me.' 'Yes,' he replied. 'The fact is I came to tell you that to-morrow you will read in the' (naming a particularly mendacious and seditious organ of the Press) 'a virulent article against yourself.' A light broke on me. 'And you, Basanta Babu, have written it.' 'Yes,' he answered, 'I have written it. It is all a pack of lies;

<sup>1</sup> If you know a Bengali well, you address him by his first name followed by 'Babu'. Some Britons unfortunately use the word 'Babu' in a depreciatory sense. Its true significance is just the opposite. It is employed (like 'Mr.' or 'Esquire') to a superior or an equal. Those who misuse it might be surprised and enlightened if, as is likely enough, they heard themselves addressed as Babus when they happened to be passing through a village up country, where the word carries the double meaning of 'a stranger' and of 'an important personage'.

and, as a matter of fact, I much approve what you are doing. But I was threatened with attacks in the newspaper; and other strong pressure, which I could not resist, was brought to bear on me to write this article. So I thought I had better come and tell you. For, though the article will appear anonymously, its authorship might somehow come to your knowledge, and that might make a difference in our friendship, which I so greatly value. Therefore I judged it best that you should learn the truth from me.' I knew the man well enough to tell him unreservedly what I thought of his action, but I could not help mingling laughter with my lecture. He had known that, if he didn't slang me, the Press would slang him; and that would be intolerable. Basanta Babu took my observations on his conduct quite well and admitted they were deserved. We parted then, and continued thereafter, on the friendliest terms.

The second fault, lack of practical ability, arises from a critical habit of mind, which sees the dangers and difficulties, rather than the advantages, of any course of action. 'The Bengali,' says an up-country proverb, 'is like the white ant. He pulls down palaces but cannot construct a hovel.' This trait leads to an ultra-conservatism, a love of the static. The Bengali likes to have men about him 'that are fat, sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights', and suspects that those who are thin and think too much are dangerous. A corpulent member of the I.C.S. was transferred to a Bengal district as Collector. The leading pleader of the place came to pay his respects, sat down heavily, and steadfastly regarded the newcomer. After a while he broke silence: 'We are very glad to see your honour here. Your honour's predecessor was a very lean man, who was always prying where he had no need to pry, making changes where no change was wanted, and putting us into great troubles. But your

honour is like a great pot of water, calm and still.' Suspicion, real or affected, of what may be intended is a favourite ingredient of criticism. A public meeting was being held to discuss some topic of local interest. One of the speakers made a long oration, during which a Bengali in the audience went to sleep. The cessation of the speaker's voice awoke the sleeper, who, when the chairman asked if anyone had any observations to make on the speech, rose to his feet and said, 'I object *in toto*.' A compatriot seated next to him pulled him by the coat: 'How can you object to what you haven't heard. You were asleep all the time.' To which the other replied, 'I cannot imagine any man speaking for such a length of time without saying many things open to the most serious objection.' Criticism is so much easier, and often pleasanter, than action.

The native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.

It is sometimes asserted that the late Sir Rajendranath Mukherji was the only Bengali who really achieved big business; and he was largely dependent on the gifted and energetic members of an English family. There stand on the border of Bengal iron and steel works reputed to be the most extensive in the British Empire. But they owe their existence to Parsee enterprise.

Let us turn to the more agreeable task of enumerating the Bengali's good qualities. First and foremost, the Bengali has a strong sense of loyalty. It is loyalty not to a cause or an idea but to a person—to the person, for instance, set in authority over him. In order fully to evoke this loyalty one or other of two conditions is necessary—personal contact or emotional influence. If you establish friendly relations with subordinates in an office they will do anything for you. You want a piece of work

completed at once; they will toil all night to do it, will dispense with their meals, will put forth their utmost energies so that their master may not be let down. Equally strong is the emotional (one might almost call it the mystical) bond. India in general harbours a deep-rooted veneration for the King-Emperor. Profound and steadfast as is that veneration in the north and west, it is more demonstrative in the east. Its expression in the Punjab is staid and dignified; in Bengal it is vivid and exuberant. When King George V was in Calcutta after the announcement of his coronation in Delhi, crowds assembled each morning at the gates of Government House to see him come forth for his early ride. The Bengalis organized a pageant on the Maidan. The crowd that flocked to the spectacle was estimated at a million. But the real attraction was the chance of getting a glimpse of the King and Queen. This had been realized, and winding lanes enclosed by barricades had been arranged, so that on the way back as much of the crowd as possible should see them. When at the conclusion of the pageant they drove in an open carriage round the Maidan, the crowd broke through the barriers, surged round the carriage and escorted it back to Government House. Though Bengal for some years had been notorious for anarchist outrages and the King and Queen were for the time being entirely in the hands of the thousands who seethed about them, they waved aside all attempt at police protection, displaying not only complete indifference to danger but also delight at this spontaneous demonstration. When I left the pageant so dense was the throng that it was impossible to cross the Maidan to Chowringhee. So I went to have a cup of tea with some friends on a launch in the Hooghly. The sun had just sunk when I set out thence to return home. The great multitude had melted away. But, as I turned round the corner of the pavilion where the King

and Queen and other distinguished guests had sat during the performance, I saw standing in front of it a crowd of people, who were stepping out in good order, one by one, towards the pavilion. Each of them entered the back of the pavilion, came forward till he was immediately in front of the two silver-gilt thrones, then threw himself on the ground and with his forehead touched the spot where the royal feet had rested. Beside the thrones stood a well-known Calcutta resident and one European Police Inspector; these had induced the crowd not to rush the pavilion in their eagerness to pay homage and had so organized things that all in turn should approach the thrones and clasp, as it were, the shadow which majesty had left behind. I wished I had a camera. I saw a man who had one, kneeling and photographing; and afterwards I saw in the illustrated papers what I assume was the result of his attempt. But, as the light had failed and the moving scene had to be snapped, the picture was very dim.

A second amiable quality of the Bengali is his attitude as a family man. He has the deepest devotion to his own circle. And not only so; he also extends his kindliness to a wide range of more distant relatives. Let us suppose that he reaps the harvest of his labours in the shape of a flourishing practice in the Courts or promotion in government service. At once a swarm of less fortunate clansmen—uncles, nephews, sons-in-law, cousins—swoop down upon him with their families and demand their share of his earnings. I have known cases where such a one has had to take a large house for the accommodation of a tribe numbering thirty or forty, furnish it for their use and feed them daily. He might in private grumble a little at this invasion; but his grumbling would be good-humoured and he would regard this large-scale entertainment as a matter of course. Such generosity



encourages the thriftless and the lazy to rest content with a parasite existence. But this aspect of his action is entirely eclipsed by the benefactor's sense of duty to his kith and kin; and a charitable toleration which in other nations would seem misplaced is no doubt writ in letters of gold in his *karma*.

This pleasant trait also exhibits itself in hospitality to strangers. When touring in Bengal I have been embarrassed by the number of invitations extended to me. The movements of an official are quickly known. I would awake in the morning to find half a dozen telegrams from persons whose houses lay on my day's line of march inviting me to breakfast. From these I would select one of unimpeachable character whose door I should be likely to reach about midday. To the others I would telegraph my inability to accept and my hope to call on them *en route*. As a result, I used to find the would-be hosts awaiting me by the road, each with tea, bananas, and cigarettes ready on a table to support me on my way till the hour appointed for 'brunch' should arrive. At each of these places an exchange of courtesies and a chat. Finally I reach the house I have selected. I will describe the details of one of these entertainments. I had accepted the invitation of a good landlord, not one of your absentees who squander their rents in Calcutta and leave the business of their estate to agents, but one who lived among his people and interested himself in their affairs. He and his sons meet me at the door arrayed in frock-coats and top-hats, just to add tone to the occasion. They conduct me into a large room adorned with cut-glass chandeliers, coloured glass globes, and an incongruous collection of oleographs. A butler rushes forward with a wire-cutter in one hand and a quart bottle of champagne in the other. 'Stop!' I cry. 'Don't open the champagne, please. But if you have a bottle of beer——' 'You are curious

folk, you English,' laughs the host. 'You all want beer for breakfast and refuse champagne. And yet champagne is much more expensive.' Notwithstanding their up-to-date clothes, the family are strict Brahmans. So they cannot eat with me. But they sit round talking, while they egg me on to dispose of course after course of excellent food. And such is their natural good-breeding that their presence at this one-man meal is no embarrassment. After breakfast I must visit the garden. This done, I point out that it is late and I must really be off. They throw up their hands in feigned horror. 'But your horse! It has disappeared.' They have played a little practical joke on me and soon confess it. 'It is really much too hot for your honour to ride in the afternoon, and you have already ridden very far. So we have sent your horse on to the next halting-place. The carriage will be round in a moment.' I chide them laughingly. They shake their heads and chuckle, say that next time I come they will have a duck-shoot, see me into their barouche and pair and wave many farewells. A very pleasant entertainment. When I have driven about a mile I find that an errant river has broken through the road and the carriage can proceed no farther. Fortunately my syce has had the sense to wait at the breach with the horse. If any think that my host's conduct on this occasion was inspired by self-seeking motives, I may remind him that I had no influence over the material well-being of these people, no administrative power, no wide patronage to exercise. It was all pure kindness and sociability.

Nor can admiration be refused to the Bengali's intelligence. It may be that the mixture of various strains, Dravidian, Mongoloid, and Aryan, has had a stimulating effect upon the grey matter. Anyway the Bengali's brain is singularly nimble. More readily than other Indians did he tumble to the advantages of English education,

so that he found his way into clerical and other professional posts in provinces outside his own, and in his own for long swamped out the more slow-moving Muslims, though these actually form a majority in the population of Bengal. And who can deny that the Bengali Hindu makes a careful and industrious clerk or an eloquent pleader of a cause? He is capable of acquiring a command of English such as many an educated Englishman might envy; and I have heard the more gifted of his kind deliver speeches, even when unprepared (I might almost say especially when unprepared), perfect in form and expression. Nor is it only in government service or the legal profession that the Bengali's mental alertness has given him a good start. Once his language, with the help of devoted missionaries such as William Carey, had acquired literary shape, it blossomed forth in prose and poetry. Bankim Chandra Chatterji, writing partly under the influence of Victor Hugo's works, undertook for the traditions and ways and habits of Bengal much the same task that Sir Walter Scott performed for Scotland. And not only in his own language but also in his treatment of English in its more delicate forms has the Bengali reached a high level, as witness the exquisite lyrics of Manmohan Ghose.

This intellectual activity has shown itself in a deep interest in religious and philosophical topics. Pre-eminent among Bengali thinkers stands Rammohan Roy, who, born in the eighteenth century, sought, as others before and after him have sought, to cleanse Hinduism of the idolatry and the revolting practices which too often disfigure it. Hence arose the Brahmo-Samaj movement, which is a revolt against such horrors as suttee, against caste restrictions, against the seclusion of women, and substitutes for polytheism a philosophic and unitarian version of Hinduism. It is indicative of the strength of

traditional orthodoxy, aided by nationalistic tendencies and a retrogressive urge towards the past, that the influence of this reform has remained circumscribed and is now on the wane. Nevertheless, the Bengali retains an inquisitive and open mind on religious questions. The New Testament is extensively read and its teachings admired. An old Bengali friend of mine, who was, among other things, an accomplished author, used to tell me much about his researches in comparative religion, in the course of which he carried on a large correspondence with thinkers in various countries, especially in America. One day I asked him to tell me frankly to what faith he adhered. 'In my house and among my women-folk,' he replied, 'I am a Hindu and perform the ceremonies. In my club and among my fellow-men I belong to the Brahmo-Samaj. In my heart I am a Christian.'

When I say that the Bengali has a sense of humour it will be objected that the humour is unintentional. The objection is true only in a limited way. It applies to the misuse of a language of which the user has, through faulty teaching or perhaps lack of contact with English folk, learned the vocabulary and structure but has not mastered the idiom or the precise use of words. Hence the artless extravagances of the famous autobiographer who turned up in the morning fresh as a new-scraped carrot. I came across many queer curiosities. I quote two of them, each of which has also a ring of pathos by reason of its connexion with a tragic event. A Calcutta newspaper described a cyclone, which 'was not satisfied simply with razing a number of houses to the ground and uprooting a number of plants and trees of that village, but went to the extent of destroying nine Muhammadan souls with a good number of cattle and poultry. These simple Muhammadans were suddenly taken up unawares by a violent whirlwind which carried them away to the open

field where they breathed their last unseen and unhelpt by their friends and relatives.' As for the Hindus of the village, they 'tried to cope with this unexpected calamity with holy cries of *Bande Mataram*'.<sup>1</sup> The other example is connected with a really horrid incident. One Christmas Day (and in those strenuous times that day was far from being a whole holiday) I was scanning some reports which included the minutes of meetings of high school committees. In one of these, tucked away among the usual slush about fees, petty repairs and such like, was the following item: 'Reported—That Abdul Ghafur, a student of the third class, has been sentenced to be hanged for the murder of Bishan Das Dutt, a student of the fifth class. Considered—What action to be taken between the sentence and its execution. Resolved—That Abdul Ghafur be temporarily suspended.' At first blush it sounded like a grim joke. Then it was borne in on me that it was a grim reality. I hastened to the house of the Lieutenant-Governor, got his ready consent to endeavour to stay the execution of a mere youngster and telegraphed round to every jail where the lad was likely to be incarcerated. At the same time I called for a report of the proceedings which had led to the sentence. The sad fact was then disclosed that Abdul Ghafur was no mere youngster but one of those young men of the lazy sort who are allowed by weak-minded masters or fee-loving managers to hang on at school long after the proper age, in the hope of having the luck some day to pass an examination; and he had brutally murdered a small boy for the sake of his gold ornaments. So he passed from temporary to permanent suspension.

<sup>1</sup> *Bande Mataram*, 'Hail to the Motherland'—the refrain of the magnificent song of the Sunnyasis in Bankim Chandra Chatterji's novel, *Anandamath*. The cry came to be used as a nationalist slogan during the anti-partition agitation.

The Bengali's conscious humour is shown in the fact that, when guilty of such lapses, he will join heartily in the laugh against himself; and who can deny that the lapses add to the gaiety of nations? But they grow fewer as his knowledge of idiomatic English improves; and he is quite capable of using that language to give pithy expression to pawky sentiments or whimsical ideas. The following is a little joke perpetrated by a Bengali employee of the Bengal-Assam Railway. He was sent as station-master to a small and jungly place on the hill section of that line. The place abounded in tigers; and the new station-master, being young, active, and a keen sportsman, wanted to do some execution among them. But he couldn't afford to buy a rifle. It occurred to him that, if he joined the Volunteers, he would be able to use his service rifle. In those days, however, the Volunteer force was open only to Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Parsees and Armenians. This seemed a fatal obstacle to his ambition. He circumvented it by giving in his name, not as Satish Chandra Mukherji, which in reality it was, but as Sydney Kenneth Mackenzie, was accepted as a dark-complexioned Anglo-Indian, was duly enrolled, got his rifle and shot several tigers. Then somehow he was found out, was ejected from the Volunteers and had his rifle taken away from him. This story was told to me by one of the railway officials whom I met as he was travelling to the station where Satish Chandra Mukherji was station-master. 'Satish is a good sportsman,' he said. 'I'm going to do something for him and get him another rifle. Then he can shoot some more of those tigers.'

The Bengali journalist is quite capable of conscious humour and sometimes mixes it amusingly with invective. The same paper which had welcomed me as a 'mischievous importation' described me years afterwards (when the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam had

been abolished) as 'that effete relic of a defunct satrapy'. I thought that was good enough to frame and hang up in my office for the delectation of visitors. But that which most pleased me was a quaint device adopted by another editor who, scanning the reports of his correspondents from two places, one of which we may call A and the other B, about a hundred miles apart, saw that a charming effect might be produced by telescoping them together. The correspondent at A described a visit by the Lieutenant-Governor to a peaceful town; he at B had to tell of a savage inter-communal outbreak. Once he had grasped the great idea, all the editor had to do was to arrange sentences alternately from each report, with the following result. 'The Lieutenant-Governor landed from his launch and was received by the gentry of the town. He drove to the town-hall. The rioters were rushing along the street, fracturing skulls and trespassing into the houses of respectable gentlemen in broad daylight. His Honour made a short speech and then began inspection of local schools, hospital, and jail. Though the rioters continued their nefarious work for two hours together at a distance of only a few minutes' walk from the police station, no action was taken by the authorities and a temple of Kali was wrecked. His Honour expressed himself as well pleased with all he saw. Presently an ancient Brahman's head was broken.' And so forth.

I will give one further example, though I don't know whether it should be classed as a piece of humour or as an instance of seriously meant but fantastic ingenuity. The incident was narrated to me by the late Lieutenant-General Aylmer, V.C., as having happened when he was a Colonel serving on the North-West Frontier. I describe it in his own words as nearly as I can remember them. 'Some tribesmen had been raiding into British territory. I was sent with a small force to quell the trouble. I

located the tribesmen entrenched in *sangars* on a steep hillside. It was hopeless trying to dislodge them with the force at my disposal. So I took up a position on the plain facing the hill and sent back to Peshawar for reinforcements. This took some time, and meanwhile we had to wait patiently. Our commissariat clerk was a Bengali. One morning he appeared at my tent, seeking an interview. "Well, Babu Sahib," I asked, "what is it you have to say?" "Sir," replied the clerk, "this very bad business. Enemy strongly posted. British troops too few to storm position. Meantime commissariat stores being eaten up." "Yes," I said, "a bad business indeed. And what do you advise?" "I have made a plan," replied the clerk. "The time has now come to invite the hostile generals to a banquet. I will poison them." I had to explain that this was no longer an approved form of warfare; but I consoled the clerk by congratulating him on the zeal he had shown in the public service and assuring him that I should recommend his name for the title of Rai Bahadur.

Such are the characteristics of the Bengali as I found him. On balance he comes off by no means badly.



## *Chapter X*

### SIMLA

ANYONE who visits Simla for the first time is liable to be struck by two things about the place—it is scenic and it is silent. When I say it is scenic I mean that it wears the appearance of a stage setting such as one sees, for example, in the first act of a light opera. So many of the buildings have a gimcrack look. The church, the civil secretariat and Viceregal Lodge are notable exceptions. But of these the two last mentioned add to the dramatic effect. For the secretariat, though designed with oriental features, gives the impression of a French château; and the Viceroy's residence, far set on a remote hill, provides the romantic backing which appropriately closes a stage vista. Trees and flowers mingle with the buildings. At one season white tassels of pseudacacia nod over the road; at another there is suddenly revealed a bank of pink cosmos—cosmos far lustier than what we know in northern climes and displaying a solid sheet of blossom. In the distance are brown cardboard-like mountains, varied by big patches of dark green forest. In the monsoon these mountains take on a brilliant green, and beyond them, when the rain-swept air is clear, gleam the unmelting snows. Rain may fall and mist may gather; but they disperse, and the sun shines out all the more brightly on a more colourful scene and adds to the illusion of artificiality. Then the silence—only the highest in the land are permitted to use motor-cars; for the roads are narrow and run along the edge of sheer descents. There are no horse-drawn vehicles. The ordinary means of locomotion are riding and the rickshaw. So traffic is soundless save for the occasional ring of a hoof and the soft call of the jham-

panies as they run the rickshaws along and warn against collisions.

But these outward impressions in no way reflect the life of the place. Below that artificial and peaceful surface there lies a stern reality, an undertone of busy activities. For here is the Olympus where the gods, when they did not descend to Calcutta or Delhi, sat (and, I presume, still though less often sit), not careless of mankind but worrying a good deal about the welfare of one-fifth of the human race, declared or composed wars, issued fiat for enthronements and discrownments. And, amid this hum of public affairs, some folk have been unkind enough to say they could not sleep o' nights by reason of the sound of the grinding of private axes. Simla may now have lost much of her former importance. But she can look back on an illustrious past.

The Simla Hills were discovered in the year of Waterloo, during a war waged against the Gurkhas, who had invaded neighbouring territory. The first permanent house in the place was built in 1824. Viceroy's would now and then spend here a part of the hot weather, when time and tours in pre-railway days allowed such relaxation. As means of communication were improved, Simla became the regular summer resort of the Government of India and the Government of the Punjab. Lord Lawrence, no light task-master, said that more work could be done in one day in the climate of Simla than in five days in Calcutta. That is an exaggeration. But, apart from healthier surroundings, Simla had this advantage as a headquarters, that the central government was removed from too long a sojourn in a single province and was brought for a time into closer contact with the problems of the Punjab and of the Indian States. So for more than a century some of these fantastic dwellings have housed statesmen and soldiers who have helped in making history. Lord Dalhousie during his

stays in Simla wrote many of his delightful letters and planned modern developments for India in the house called Strawberry Hill. His *bête noire*, Napier, occupied Woodville. Lord Lytton held his revels at Peterhof. Among more recent buildings, Snowdon was the home of Lord Roberts, and there Lord Kitchener tended his roses, clad in the early morning, so gossips said, in bright blue pyjamas. The present Viceregal Lodge witnessed the nightly toils of Lord Curzon. And the place is haunted by memories and ghosts of another description. At Auckland House, which at one time served as the Viceroy's dwelling, danced the fascinating Mrs. J. James, famous as Lola Montez and the Countess of Landsfeld. At Rothney Castle Madame Blavatzky and Mr. Hume practised their theosophic rites. It was in Simla that the mysterious Mr. Jacob plied his trade, and Prince Alexis Soltikoff and Herr Walhausen dispensed royal hospitality.

Turning from the past to the present, I must explain that in speaking of Simla as she is I mean Simla as I knew the place a quarter of a century ago. Now that she is less frequented, she has probably lost some of the brilliance that once adorned her. Do the Black Hearts still delight society with their lavish dances? Does the theatre still scintillate with amateur talent? Are the boxes still auctioned to those who are anxious worthily to accommodate youth and beauty at the play? Do those charming and intimate little dinners still take place at the Chalet? Do crowds, on horseback or in rickshaw, still wend their way to sumptuous parties, and return in the small hours when moonlight kisses distant hill and deep valley and wakens dreams of romance in youthful bosoms? Do gallant cavalcades ride forth to Mashobra or Wildflower Hall along ways overshadowed by deodars and through the tunnel where Kitchener broke his leg?—quite an easy place to break a limb in, as it was when I first made its acquaintance; it

was narrow, dark, dripping, and cumbered with wooden uprights to support the roof of rock—a very different sort of tunnel from what it now is, widened, cleared of props, and electrically lighted.

Simla's greatest asset was the gay and gifted society there collected. If you wanted fun, there were plenty of young and cheery souls. And there were some who, though no longer young, still bubbled with life. Take, for instance, General Sir Arthur Sloggett, who defied the menace of the years and retained a heart susceptible to the shafts of beauty, though it had once proved impervious to a bullet. That was at the battle of Omdurman. Sloggett assured me that it was a fact, and that the bullet had miraculously avoided anything vital in that sensitive organ. But I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the epilogue, as reported, to that escape, though there is nothing incredible about it. Sloggett was once on duty at a review of troops. The old Duke of Cambridge, hearing he was on the ground, ordered him up. 'Colonel Sloggett,' said the Duke, 'is it true that you were shot through the heart?' Sloggett replied in the affirmative. 'Then what the deuce d'ye mean by being alive?' 'Sir,' replied Sloggett, 'when I was shot through the heart, faith, my heart was in my mouth.'

Such a society offers many distractions—in more than one sense of the word. Among such distractions was the practice of calling. The etiquette in India (except in the Bombay Presidency, where the rule observed in England holds good) is for the new-comer to call first upon the older resident or upon an official superior, whether the latter be an older resident or no. That is quite a natural and sensible arrangement in the circumstances existing in India, and it works well enough in a place of moderate size. But in large centres it makes a serious inroad on the time of the new arrival, since practically everybody who is

anybody expects to be called upon. In Simla the prescribed method was less rigid than in Calcutta. There one was expected to call only on Sunday afternoons, when the ladies were at home to receive and consequently you could put in only a limited number of calls and were haunted by the nightmare that, had you a hundred Sundays to do it in, you could never fully discharge this duty. To add to the terrors of this nightmare, you were expected, even on the sultriest day, to appear in a frock- or tail-coat and to carry your top-hat and gloves with you into the drawing-room. I used to drive round in my buggy wearing a sun-hat, my top-hat tucked under the seat and assumed only on entering a house. In Simla, on the other hand, you could call on any day, at any reasonable hour and in any respectable garb; and, above all, the habit had grown of placing boxes at the gate of the drive or in the veranda, so that callers could deposit their cards without entering. (The very great big-wigs, civil and military, had books placed under the eye of an orderly, in which the visitor inscribed his name, profession and address.) But even so, if a very large number of calls had to be made, it was difficult for a solitary man to do all that was expected of him. The new-comer might be busy all day in his office and able to spare only three or four hours in the working week for needful exercise; and in Simla, where the houses are scattered up and down steep and tortuous paths, progress was necessarily slow. We therefore devised co-operative systems. Three of us would arrange together for a calling campaign, divide the station, like Gaul, into three parts, mount our ponies and set off, each armed with a list of the people to be called upon and a supply of his own and his confederates' cards sufficient to allow of three pairs of cards being dropped into each box. By this means we could get through a hundred or more calls in a couple of hours. This is a satisfactory example of mass-production.

But it requires preparation and forethought. Duplication must be avoided. There came to a certain hill-station a light-hearted young officer, who, being on leave, spent his days in golf and such-like pastimes. These preoccupations left no time for calling. So he handed out packets of his cards promiscuously to his friends and asked them to drop the cards into any boxes they happened to pass. One evening he found himself seated at dinner next to a lady who was very punctilious about social proprieties. Knowing her reputation in this respect and forgetful of the possible results of the method, or lack of method, which he had adopted, he imprudently apologized for not having called at her house. 'On the contrary,' she replied, 'judging from the number of your cards found in my box you appear to have called upon me thirty-two times.'

A difficulty which confronted those unacquainted with Simla and other hill-stations was the labyrinth of by-ways which gave access to many of the houses. A stranger was dependent upon a syce or jhampanies who knew the place. There is a tragic story of a lady calling in Simla in a rickshaw pulled by jhampanies who knew not the locality. They completely lost their way among the paths which furrow the face of Jakko. At last the lady descried an imposing stone building at the foot of the hill and, thinking she could make inquiry there, directed the men to take her down to it. The building happened to be the United Service Club, where entrance was totally forbidden to ladies. In happy ignorance of the enormity she was committing, madam alighted from her rickshaw, tripped up the steps and, espying in the hall a resplendent and reliable-looking figure clad in blue and crimson, entered the hall in hope of eliciting information. Everyone who was acquainted with Simla in those days will recognize in that resplendent figure the famous 'Garge', a colossal Portuguese, who, it was rumoured, discharged

(when not more lucratively employed) responsible duties in the army at Goa. When he saw the vision of a female form profaning this sacred precinct, the gallant Garge was rendered speechless with horror. But something had to be done. With commendable tact and presence of mind he snatched a notice from the wall and, holding it in front of him, barred further progress to the intruder. The notice ran: 'Dogs and other noxious animals are not allowed in the club.'

Happily there has been reform of social customs. 'Calling Leagues' have been established. One pays a small annual subscription, receives a printed list of members and sends his cards to each of them by post. A sensible arrangement.

Once the requirements of calling have been met and the caller's credentials established, the rest is easy. He is welcomed into society and shares in its entertainments. These, as offered in Simla and other large centres, are not the simple affairs characteristic of the small up-country station. The merchant princes of Calcutta and Bombay are lavish in the expenditure of their millions. The representatives of the King-Emperor must retaliate in due proportion. The smaller fry follow suit—at a respectful distance but still with a superabundance of hospitality which is at times distracting and imposes a strain alike on giver and receiver. A few of the recipients yield to the strain with disastrous effects. Any eligible youth, whose quick intelligence had brought him early to Simla and whose prospects seemed dazzlingly brilliant, was naturally much sought after in society—not least by matrons who entertained splendid visions of a desirable marriage and a daughter destined one day to be the partner of a member of the Viceroy's Council or of a provincial Governor. Such a one would receive a bewildering load of invitations and attentions; and woe betide him if he bowed too

much to the former or became intoxicated by the latter. I remember the fate of a youth who was early promoted to a secretariat post at Simla. He was handsome, a good dancer and an accomplished musician. Work fell into arrears. His superior officer grumbled and, when a sympathetic lady pleaded that the dear boy had such a light touch on the piano, retorted that his touch was equally light on the files. As a result, he was pushed down from the ladder that might have led to success. Rumour said that the last straw was his reaction to a demand for a list of the cases pending with him. He replied that to make such a list was beyond his powers, but he enclosed a photograph of his office table.

In a community where everybody knew everybody else and it was easy to ascertain who was present or absent at any function, a certain jealousy grew up among the less well regulated of the fairer sex. Mrs. A. could not bear to think that she should be absent from a social event to which she had not been invited and should have to quiver under her rival Mrs. B.'s condescending description of its magnificence. This led to a limited amount of gate-crashing; and it was said that measures to exclude the importunate had to be taken even at Viceregal Lodge. I never but once heard of a man guilty of gate-crashing. He lived in Calcutta and held the opinion that no party given in that city was complete without himself. It happened that some friends of mine gave a dance to celebrate an approaching marriage or a coming of age—I forget which. This gentleman was not invited. But he came. The good-natured host, aware of the intruder's weakness, tolerated his presence. But, the dance ended and the other guests departed, the host and his relatives sat down to a little supper; and, regardless of all propriety, the gate-crasher still tarried and joined the family party. Now this was a little too much; for the supper was an intimate affair, good



wishes being expressed and healths drunk in honour of the happy domestic event. So the host, in order that the misdemeanour might not go altogether unnoticed, rose and proposed a toast—'Before we part, let us drink the health of the uninvited guest.' The guest, unabashed, sprang to his feet and declared that yet another toast remained to be drunk—'To the uninviting host.' I should have felt some compunction about telling a story which left the aggressor in the position of top dog, but for the fact that it is credibly stated that the young men of the house hastened the gate-crasher's departure and that it was not unaccompanied with pain.

There was also, for the serious-minded, an ample circle from which to choose; for Simla naturally attracted many of the brightest brains in the provinces. And there were plenty of interesting visitors. One of these, Sir Valentine Chirol, used at times to stay with me. It was a delight to listen to his reminiscences of men and things. His knowledge and experience ranged over China, India, Egypt, and, most of all, the Balkans, on which last he was a mine of information. While speaking of Chirol I cannot forbear recounting a story which he was fond of telling and of the truth of which (since he was no romancer) I have no doubt.

Chirol once dreamed that he was voyaging to India. While they were in the Red Sea, the ship, much to his surprise, turned out of its usual course and headed towards Arabia. The coast came into sight—low, desolate, a waste of burning sand backed by dark and distant hills. And there was a town—flat-roofed houses, mosques, minarets, a few palm-trees. The ship came to anchor; boats were lowered; the passengers, Chirol himself included, were taken ashore. On the quay stood an official, in whom Chirol recognized an acquaintance in the consular service. Large and excited crowds were pouring along the streets.

Chirol asked his acquaintance what it all meant. 'What!' cried the official, 'don't you know? Of course everybody's here. See the gentleman riding off on the camel over there? That's Albert Edward, Prince of Wales. You're in Jeddah, and the whole world's in Jeddah to-day.' 'But why in Jeddah?' asked Chirol. 'Because,' answered the other, 'they're running the Derby in Jeddah this year.' Thereupon the dreamer awoke, much amused. Early in the next summer he returned to England. One morning, looking over *The Times*, his eye alighted on the word 'Jeddah'. Remembering his dream, he glanced at the connexion in which it occurred. It was the name of a horse entered for the Derby. That day he was lunching with friends. A nephew of his was of the party—a youth of a sporting turn of mind, who regarded his uncle as a nice old fogey totally ignorant of, and indifferent to, all matters appertaining to the turf. He offered to transact bets for anyone who wanted a flutter, and, having undertaken some commissions, turned to Chirol. 'Well, uncle Valentine, I suppose it's no use asking if I can do anything for you?' 'On the contrary,' said Chirol, 'you can put as much on a horse called Jeddah as will bring me in £500 if he wins.' The lad pointed out that he'd be merely wasting his money; but Chirol insisted. 'Very well,' said his nephew. 'Anyway, it won't cost you much, for the odds are a hundred to one against the horse.' It was the astounding race of 1898, and Chirol won his £500.

There was also a foreign element in Simla society; for the Consuls-General used to come there for the season. The German representative was Prince Henry XXXI of Reuss, inevitably nicknamed 'the Thirsty-First'. He maintained a good house and a cellar of fine hock. Some of the other Consuls-General were not so well financed by their governments and found it convenient to reside in hotels or at the club. One evening that gallant soldier the late

Major-General Sir Francis Drummond was entertaining some of them to dinner. Prince Henry laughingly asserted that he was the only foreign representative who kept a decent house. The Russian Consul-General, Arsenieff, a magnificent figure of a man, recognized only one meaning of the word 'decent' and accordingly challenged Prince Henry (a person of rather quiet and studious habits) to a duel to be fought in one of the smaller Indian States which encompass British territory at Simla. Their host explained the misunderstanding and composed the matter. The wits could not suffer so promising an incident to pass unnoticed and invented the story that 'Drummie declared that he had averted an international complication and was surprised when his action was not rewarded with the Order of St. Vladimir or even the Red Eagle'.

The place of Prince Henry was afterwards taken by Herr Luxburg, a complete contrast to his predecessor. Luxburg was a strong, stocky man and aspired to be very British in his habits. He rode a fiery steed, went shooting in the interior, and was a keen lawn-tennis player. He had the reputation of being wealthy, brought out a European butler and did a lot of entertaining. This butler was quite a character; he used to walk about the town in a bowler hat—a form of head-dress singularly unsuitable for the day-time in India; and if you were dining with his master and refused the sherry he would bend down and whisper, 'It is nice sherry and a little sherry would be good for you'. Luxburg took pains to make himself popular. But he revealed the sinister side of his character one evening at a dinner-party, when he recounted in a revoltingly heartless manner how one of his coolies had been killed by a bear during a shooting expedition in the hills—an incident which he obviously regarded as an amusing joke. All of us who were present (including, I remember, the late Sir Michael O'Dwyer and his wife) fought shy of Luxburg

after that. Sometime before the first Great War he was transferred to Buenos Ayres as Chargé d'Affaires and was subsequently responsible for the notorious *spurlos versenkt* telegram. He was thereupon expelled from the Argentine and managed somehow to run the gauntlet back to his Fatherland.

It was significant that the vacancy caused by Luxburg's transfer was not filled. His assistant, von Rosen, was left to carry on and complained to me that he was too young and inexperienced to deal with the complicated cases which arose in the *Kanzellei*. He was a Junker from the Baltic coast and a professional soldier, but quite a nice human sort of creature. He told me he had long been stationed in Freiburg-im-Breisgau; and perhaps his surroundings there had had a softening effect. When the first Great War broke out he got his papers and departed to Bombay. A few days after we were startled and shocked (for we all liked the youth) at reading in the telegrams that he had been caught and shot in Calcutta. What had happened was this. Arriving in Bombay and finding that he was unmolested and desirous of doing something for his native land, he had conceived the idea of slipping across to Calcutta with a view to picking up information there and perhaps aiding in the revolution which the Germans blindly thought would break out in India. The Intelligence Service in India is very good. (They had complete information about the German spies who had previously settled in the country under various disguises.) Von Rosen's presence in Bombay roused no suspicion; for he was diplomatic and was expected to take the next boat to some European (probably Italian) port. But the moment he disappeared from there and turned up in Calcutta, the authorities pounced upon him, carried him back to Bombay and shipped him off. We were relieved to find that 'shot' was a wrong transmission of 'shut up'. Had von

Rosen been British and Calcutta in the hands of the Germans, there would probably have been no need for the correction.

Of the Consuls-General who remained the most noteworthy was Constantine Nabokoff. Poor Nabokoff! He was a man of liberal and enlightened views, intensely proud of his country and confident of her great destinies, intensely devoted to the welfare of her people and intensely loyal to the Tsar. He gloried in the war; for he saw in it the great opportunity, the salvation, of his native land, her sword drawn in the righteous cause of liberty, her assured victory leading to a new order of things, to an era of justice, to peace from internal strife, to widespread prosperity. He would drop in upon me for half an hour in the evenings, discuss the day's news and prophesy the future. The steam-roller would roll on to Berlin; Bulgaria would of necessity expel King Ferdinand and declare for the Allies; the end would be the lifting up of the moujik, the introduction of truly democratic institutions and the strengthening of the Muscovite throne, no longer hedged about by obscurantist influences but well and truly founded in a people's love. *Dis aliter visum*. The revolution destroyed his dream. Russia's war effort petered out. His brother Vladimir, who in Tsarist times had made himself prominent in the Duma, was killed in Berlin while defending Milyukoff from a murderous attack by Russian reactionaries. And Constantine himself and his glorious visions faded away into the limbo of forgotten things. Forgotten for a time but not dead! Though the pattern of to-day is not quite what he foresaw, yet surely his spirit has watched with pride the mighty achievement of the land he loved.

A strange thing happened at Simla at the very beginning of the war. I think it was the day after its declaration that the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, received from Baron Reuter a cablegram announcing a great naval victory with

the sinking of nineteen German men-of-war. The news was the occasion of some rejoicings; and deep was the disappointment when nothing more was heard and it became clear that the battle was a myth. But news received from other quarters (e.g. that there were a number of injured German seamen in Kirkwall hospital) seemed to indicate that something had happened. Is it possible that our ships, on their way to Scapa, had encountered German mine-layers, taken off their crews and sunk them, and that both sides kept silence because the scrap occurred just before war was declared?

One of the changes made by the war was the conscription of British residents in India into the Indian Defence Force. This led to some humorous incidents. I had long been in the Volunteers and held a commission. But I now found the increased duties laid on commissioned officers incompatible with the discharge of my work as one of the secretaries to Government. So I petitioned for reduction to the ranks, and after some fuss the petition was granted. Since, however, I knew the drill, I used to be put on to drill a squad whose parade ground was a small level space at the foot of the drive leading to Viceregal Lodge. There arose a certain feeling of resentment about the Viceroy's band, the members of which, all of them *ex officio* sergeants, had not been conscribed. They were accordingly ordered to join the I.D.F. They made their first appearance on this small parade ground, and the instructor put me on to take the drill. Result—the bandmaster went to Colonel John Mackenzie, the Comptroller of the Household, and indignantly tendered his resignation (perhaps also that of the whole band), because he, a sergeant, had been ordered about by a mere private. Mackenzie afterwards told me that the resignation was quite serious and placed him in a sad fix. 'But', he added, 'you've saved me. I made inquiry who the private was and found it was you. Then

I summoned the bandmaster and asked him if he knew who had drilled them. He said all he knew was that it was a damned private. I told him it was no less than the Honourable Mr. Sharp.' (Members of the Legislative Council had that temporary title.) 'He replied that of course if it was an Honourable there was no more to be said, and he withdrew his threat of resignation.' The bandmaster hadn't grasped that the 'Mr.' made all the difference!

Soon after the outbreak of the war the Old Etonians held their annual dinner at Simla and dispatched the customary cablegram home. It ran: '*Hic in montibus fringentes, barbaris circumditi gentibus, tandem Harroviensi Proconsuli subjecti, te matrem salutamus.*' Needless to say, Lord Hardinge was of the rival school. The censor at Bombay didn't know Latin, smelled a rat and refused to send the cable. The matter was eventually explained to him; but it was then too late to send the message of greeting. The next year the dinner was held again—with diminished honours. The diners, determined that this time there should be no trouble, made their message short and plain—'Gott strafe Harrow'. Such is the story. I do not vouch for its truth.

Speaking of school rivalry reminds me of a playful jest contained in a most witty speech by the late Sir William Marris at the dinner (a customary form of farewell entertainment to a departing Viceroy) given by the United Service Club at Simla to Lord Chelmsford, who was an old Wykehamist and, incidentally, a man hardly to be equalled for modesty, consideration for others, conscientiousness and deep sense of duty. 'One hears,' said Marris, 'of Old Wykehamist dinners annually held in Simla. We who are not old Wykehamists do not know what takes place at these functions. But, judging from what we see around us, we can only surmise that they are held with a view to distributing among the participants the highest offices of state.'

To return to the attractions of Simla—in addition to society there were some facilities for sport, though these were limited by the terrain. Simla is built along the top of a knife-edge with precipitous slopes on each side. (Incidentally this fact makes the water-supply a serious problem, and much of it had to be pumped up more than 3,000 feet, in what was claimed to be the highest drive in the world, to a point eight miles from the town and thence conducted in pipes. Even so, the supply was quite insufficient. I was much interested in this problem, and, as chairman of the Simla Improvement Trust, I at last, after several vain attempts and much labour, got sanction for a pump to raise water 4,000 feet from an inexhaustible source.) Space for a polo ground and a small race course has been partly scooped out and partly heaped up some 1,300 feet below the top of the ridge. There is a miniature golf course about seven miles away, where, if you slice your ball, it may land a couple of thousand feet below. But the chief form of out-door amusement is lawn-tennis. Excellent material is available for the making of hard courts. Some of these are supported on timber floors built out from the hillside where the ground falls away. The standard of play used to be quite high, and Simla produced several distinguished performers at Wimbledon. Tennis courts on the north side of the ridge, if flooded at night, afforded skating next morning to those who had to stay in Simla during the winter. It sounds ridiculous to talk of skating in India. But Simla is far to the north and lies 7,000 feet above sea-level. The place is often under snow for considerable periods and very beautiful it looks when the deodars and pines are clad in white. I once awoke on a morning in mid-April to find them so clad. But that was exceptional. And I shall never forget a walk I took one afternoon, when I was kept in Simla till the end of November, with Sir Henry Hayden the explorer, who



was afterwards killed in the Alps. We went up the long hill above Mashobra on the north side. A wintrier scene could not be imagined. The trees were heavily laden with snow; vast icicles, yards in length, hung from the rocks above. At the top we turned the sharp corner on to the south face. In a moment we seemed to be transported into midsummer. No trace of snow, but brilliant sunshine, bright green foliage and warm hillsides where the grass was already ripening to its summer brown. To those who could go farther afield the Tibet road to Narkhanda and Bhagi afforded a glorious walk through forests of deodar and giant silver fir.

There was also some shooting to be had. Panthers were occasionally bagged close to Simla. One was shot just below my house. The servants had warned me that he was about and might carry off my dogs. I was incredulous. But one evening when I returned home from office I found that fine frontier officer Sir John Donald sitting in the veranda, refreshing himself with a whisky and soda and viewing with complacency the body of a seven-foot panther. While out for a stroll along a jungle path he had caught sight of the beast. The next evening he lay in wait for it and got it. I told him he was welcome to my whisky but mustn't go poaching my panthers. Sometimes in the very early morning I have heard the muntjac (rib-faced deer) barking in my garden. Bears are to be found. Chikor (*Caccaleis chukor*, practically identical with the French red-legged partridge) are fairly plentiful. And there are several kinds of pheasant, which for the most part increase in size and splendour of plumage in direct ratio to the altitude at which they dwell. Beginning with the black tailless pheasant called Kalij (*Callophasis albocristatus*), they ascend to the Cheer (*Phasianus wallichii*), the gorgeously plumaged Minal (*Lophophorus impeyanus*), and finish up with the Koklas and the Tragopan or Argus pheasant.

I used to go for four or five days' shooting during the Hindu holidays in October. My companions were generally B. J. Gould and L. W. Reynolds, now respectively Sir Basil and Sir Leonard. The former, who afterwards rose to fame in Tibet, was a mighty man upon the mountains; and both of them were strong, sturdy and thoroughly accustomed to the difficulties and hazards of the country we had to traverse. Long used as I was to the flat and watery plains of Bengal, I was terrified at the precipitous places they enticed me to negotiate. Though the time available did not permit of our going far into the interior, the nearer hills presented quite enough of steep grass slopes which seemed to descend into nothing, of bits of rock face with sheer falls below, and of crossings on unreliable shale where torrents had swept away the narrow path. The other two used to laugh at my obvious trepidation. But very soon my head steadied and I was no longer troubled by the perils of the way.

The *modus operandi* at these shoots was as follows. We obtained leave from the Hill Chiefs to shoot in their States, hired a small string of donkeys for the transport of baggage over the initial and final marches (where the going was not too bad), gathered together a band of beaters and collected a pack of a dozen or more little dogs. When all was ready we would plunge into the interior, up-hill, down-dale, now after pheasants, now after Chikor. The black Kalij pheasant presents the most difficult shooting in the world—others who have done lots of it and of many other forms of sport agree with me in that. He lives in thick forests of conifers clothing steep hillsides. When beaten out he comes vol-planing down like a thunder-bolt between the tops of the trees. Things are not made easier for the sportsman by the fact that he generally has an awkward stance on a slope approaching an angle of forty-five degrees. The Cheer is easier to hit; for he often rockets

like a gentleman. The Chikor inhabits bare, rocky hillsides, where a clear shot can be had at him. It was in driving the Chikor that the little dogs came in handy. The birds move up from their feeding-grounds in the valleys early in the morning and ensconce themselves among rocks and stones on the summits. An old white-bearded man used to come with us on these trips. Though he seemed very aged, he possessed muscles of steel and the eyes of a hawk and was apparently quite impervious to cold. Before the sun rose he would climb to some mountain-top and mark down the coveys as they ascended the hillsides. There we would see him when the beaters had assembled, perched high upon some rocky peak, looking like a prophet of olden time and indicating with his staff the places where the birds had concealed themselves. The beaters, thus informed by his signals, go up to these places, and the dogs hunt among the rocks and chivvy the birds out. The guns, placed part-way up the hill, get high but clear shots.

The amount of game we bagged in these expeditions was small in proportion to the exertion involved. The woods are much poached; the walking (save in the forest of Dhami, which is close to Simla and is not precipitous) is severe, and my aneroid often indicated that we ascended 7,000 feet<sup>1</sup> during a day's shooting; and if each gun got one bird for every thousand feet he ascended he did not do so badly. It was altogether a tough job. The nights were cold; we sometimes had flurries of snow; and, as we soon had to abandon the donkeys and rely on coolies for transport, only the smallest tents could be carried. These would be pitched on any narrow ledge of level that was available; and there we used to have our evening meal in

<sup>1</sup> Of course this does not mean that at the end of the day one landed up at a point 7,000 feet higher than that from which he had started. It was a matter of ascending, descending into deep valleys and then ascending again. I used to take readings at the bottom and at the top of each ascent.

the open, wrapped in greatcoats with rugs round our knees. But it was great fun; the surroundings were magnificent; and we were young enough to laugh at the inconveniences. These last made the amenities of civilization all the more welcome, when, on the evening of our last day, we used rather wearily to clamber up the steep 4,000 feet from the Nauti Khud to the country club at Mashobra and, there arrived, broach a bottle of champagne before plunging into hot tubs.

A thing that added to the pleasure of these trips was the spirit of the porters and beaters. Most of them were Garhwalis; and the Garhwali displays the same keenness in sport that he does in battle. Jolly little men, enjoying the outing just as much as do the guns, laughing at hardships, unacquainted with fatigue! At the end of a strenuous day we have a trifle of a thousand or more feet to reach the tents. Should one of the party show any signs of flagging, the Garhwalis observe it, and several of them, roaring with laughter, close in behind the weary gentleman and shove him up the incline.

It was during one of these hill-shoots<sup>1</sup> that I had ocular demonstration of a curious custom of the inhabitants, of which I had previously heard but about which I had been sceptical. Lest any think I am romancing, let me quote a description of the custom from *Simla, Past and Present*, by Sir E. J. Buck.

‘There is a curious practice to which a large number of hill children are subjected by their mothers which never fails to interest visitors to the Himalayas. Having selected a spot where a stream of water is diverted into the fields, the women lull their little ones to sleep, and then, having lain them down,


<sup>1</sup> My companions on that occasion were Sir William Vincent and Sir Alexander Muddiman, both, alas, passed away. Only Sir William happened to be with me when I came upon the children seated under the waterfalls.

they arrange by means of a hollow stick or piece of bark that a tiny stream of water shall be directed to fall on each child's head. Half a dozen little ones may often be seen lying in a row, all sound asleep, with a cool stream falling on the crowns of their heads. The practice is more or less universal in the Himalayas, and the idea is that it increases hardihood and strength. The "water babies" never seem to object to the process, indeed they hardly ever move, and less seldom awake when once placed under the falling water.'

What one wonders at is that they ever wake at all! But wake they do and appear to take no harm. As I saw it, the custom varied slightly from what has just been quoted, though the discrepancy is lessened if it is borne in mind that by a 'field' Sir Edward Buck no doubt meant one of the little patches formed by terracing a steep hillside. I found the children tightly swaddled up so that they were protected from the moisture. An aperture was left for breathing, and the crown of the head was bare. Then the children were deposited under tiny natural waterfalls dropping from rocks above, a little cascade descending on each bare patch of head. The mothers told me that the object of the treatment was to improve the eyesight of their offspring.

A very pleasant place was Simla—pleasant the frolic and the fun, the good friendships made, the manifold interests that work and society provided. These things have changed and perhaps much of the glory is departed. But there are memories of other things—things that time and tide cannot change. Who, having once seen, can ever forget the magic of an evening in the monsoon, when mist and rain have freshened the foliage and the ferns that clothe the tree trunks, and suddenly the clouds break and the emerald green of a great hillside gleams in the rifts? The white vapours roll up like vast sheeted spectres. Between them the sky opens untarnished. To the north the wonder

of the snows; to the south the wide plains, bloomed with the deep blue of distance, flecked here and there with the grey of river-beds, bounded only by the perfect curve of the horizon. Or again I seem to be mounting in imagination the hills of Mahasu. Fragrant pines are about me. In the spring the primulas are pushing up through late patches of snow. In early autumn trees of *Desmodium* nod their pale blossoms over the slopes; shadowy glades glow with a mist of purple *Strobilanthes*; the woods are full of wild *Columbine*, *Delphinium* and other delights; the sunny banks are bright with red *Potentilla* or cascades of *Forget-me-not*. High up among those hills there is a spot I often visited—an upland meadow, a pool of water like an English dew-pond, a little shingle-roofed temple on a flower-clad mound. A tumbled welter of hills falls to the plain below. Far off glistens a great circle of white peaks, from the mountains of Kashmir on the north to Kedarnath with his 22,000 feet of flashing ice on the east. The splendid panorama is immersed in light and gives back light. Then, as the day wanes and we turn homeward, shadows gather in the valleys and creep up the hills. The sunset fades. The sound of mule-bells dies away on the long road to Tibet. The hush of the mountains closes about us, and the rising moon bathes height and depth in enchanted slumber. Such a scene and such an hour may well have inspired the lyrics of Alkman and Goethe.



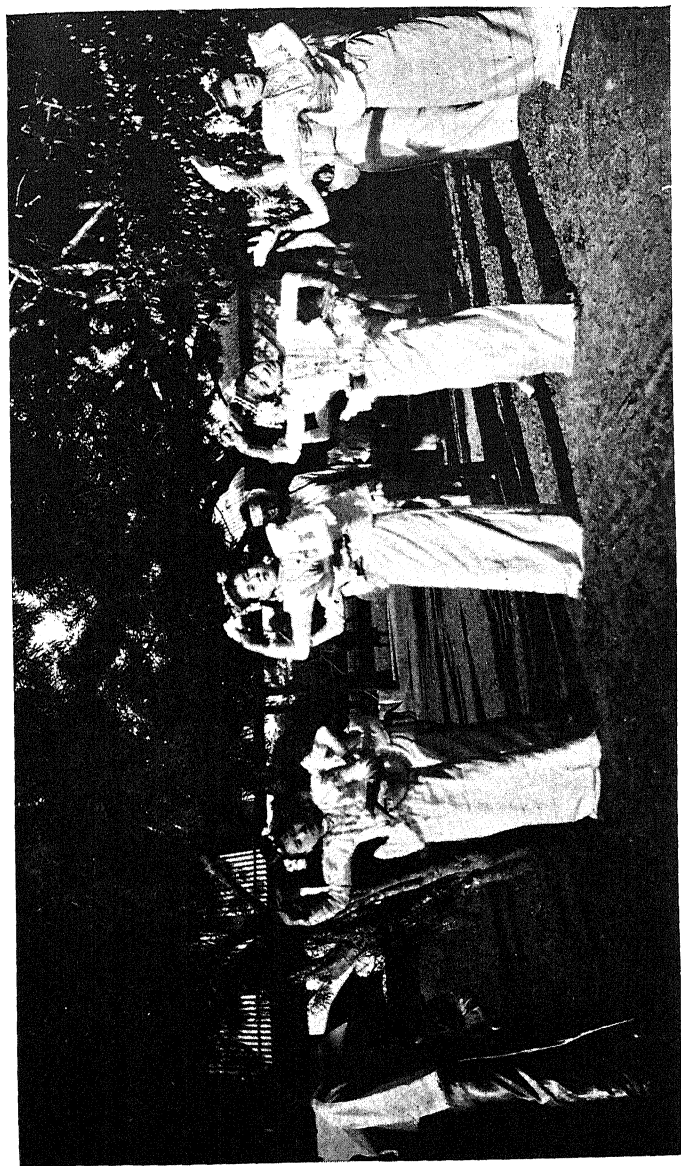
## Chapter XI

### A ROVING COMMISSION

A FEATURE which greatly adds to the interest of life in India is the variety of her races, of her ancient buildings, and of the beauties in which much of the country abounds. It was my good fortune, while I was employed under the Government of India, to have for a time a roving commission which took me into all the provinces. This chapter attempts, in however sketchy a manner, to describe the impressions left on my mind by this wide survey.

Of Burma (which was then governed as a province of India) three memories remain vivid with me—the position accorded to women, the clothes worn by the people, and the sunsets. Rather an incongruous list; but impressions come in no logical order. In the case of women the situation is almost the opposite of that which prevails over large tracts of India.<sup>1</sup> Not only is there no purdah but women play active parts in professions and business. They do it remarkably well. The little Burmese lady who keeps shop is a good saleswoman, courteous and ready to crack a joke with her customers. The headmistress of a school keeps her male assistant teachers as well as her pupils in excellent order and will stand no nonsense from either. In other respects the difference is no less marked. Dances in India are performed by professional nautch-girls, and the dances are, in the eyes of the unappreciative European,

<sup>1</sup> Of course purdah is by no means prevalent all over India. Madrassis and Marathas resent any suggestion that purdah is practised in their countries. There is no purdah among the Brahmo-Samajists in Bengal; indeed, the ladies of the Brahmo-Samaj are often trained to professions. Among the poorer classes throughout India the women who work in the fields, &c., can keep no strict purdah, though they will avert or veil their faces before strangers.



*Burmese Dance*





'contortionings frightful' of the dullest sort. The first time that I was treated to a dance (*pwe*, as it is called) in Burma, I was struck by the vivacity of the girls and the elegance of the court dresses of King Thibaw's time, so different from the shapeless wrappings in which nautch-girls are usually swaddled. When the performance was over, I asked one of the audience in a whisper what reward I should give for the entertainment. 'On no account money', he replied emphatically. 'They would be deeply insulted. There is nothing professional about them. The *pwe* is performed purely as a pastime and by the daughters of the most respectable people of the place. Of course, if you cared to give them some chocolates. . . .' I accordingly bought a box of chocolates and another of Virginia cigarettes. These the young ladies received joyfully and departed to their parental homes munching the chocolates and puffing the cigarettes at the same time.

Incidentally, the Burmese have a passion for foreign delicacies. The light refreshments which are wheeled round at railway stations largely consist of biscuits manufactured by British firms and are neatly covered up in glass cases, in contrast with the fly-blown masses of sweet-stuff which serve the same purpose in India. The difference is partly due to the prevalence of caste restrictions in India and their absence in Burma. The caste Hindu is put to difficulty on a journey because he can't get food cooked by a caste fellow. This restriction applies to food cooked in water, not to what is cooked in butter or ghee. Hence the prominence of boiled sweets. There is something cosmopolitan about Burma—naturally, since so much of the commerce and industry is in the hands of Chinese, British or Indian settlers. The Burman himself is a gay, rather happy-go-lucky creature, content if he is the proud owner of a fine silk *lungi* and a motor bicycle and he can set off attired in the one and seated on the other

for a visit to his friends in the city. He thinks (or used to think—for his mind in this respect seems recently to have changed) very little about politics and does not much care how or by whom he is governed so long as he himself is free to have a good time. The following anecdote was related to me by a high and responsible official. He was chairman of a committee which met from time to time. One morning early in the First Great War, when things were going ill and rumours were afloat that the victorious Kaiser would land in India, he met a Burmese member of the committee and remarked that he had been absent from yesterday's meeting. 'The reason', said the Burman, 'is that I had to attend another committee. Some of us were thinking it would be well to be prepared in case the German Emperor arrived here. So we held a meeting to draft an address of welcome to him.'

Then the clothes. The Burmese are about the best laundried people in the world. It is a treat to see a crowd of small boys or girls, all dressed in brilliantly white coats. How it's done is a puzzle; for I never saw any apparatus more elaborate than the customary flat stone beside a river or a tank, and the wooden mallet for pounding the clothes on the stone. The grown-ups, too, are tastefully attired, and the *lungis* worn by the men are of the finest iridescent silk.

I have mentioned the glow which comes at dawn and sundown over the great rivers of Bengal. Why, I wonder, should it be soft amber, and the glow in Burma blood-red? The effect can be seen evening after evening as one travels on the Irrawaddy—a range of low hills to the west and a row of pagodas set upon the hills, the whole in darkest indigo and sharply silhouetted against a sky of deepest rose.

It is not alone those wonderful sunsets that make Burma a land of beauty. There is something very restful about the

quiet hills, the gently flowing rivers, the majestic forest-trees. Man has added beauties of his own making to those of nature—added and, alas, also destroyed. The fairy-like palace of Mandalay has crumbled under bombardment. But it is to be hoped that the pagodas of the more ancient capital at Pagan have survived. They stand, some half decayed, some well preserved, a monument to the piety, and a memorial of the artistry, of the Burmese. For the Burman is pious in his own way, though the form of Buddhism which he practises lacks the pure simplicity enjoined by the founder of that faith. A religion that discards idols, temples, pilgrimages and all the outer trappings which appeal to the masses is clearly doomed to undergo elaboration in accordance with local traditions and superstitions. Despite departures from the original form of Buddhism, it is an impressive sight to see the Burman kneeling on the platform of a pagoda and fervently praying—albeit with a large cigar hanging from the corner of his mouth. And, after all, why not a cigar? That same cigar, made of a little tobacco and a good deal of pounded bamboo, will remain alight in his mouth all day; he (or she) wouldn't be his (or her) normal self without it. All over the country there are numbers of pagodas, and much wealth has been, and continues to be, devoted to them. In addition to the great buildings, there are the quantities of jewels that adorn the topmost pinnacles and the electric installations for their illumination. The jewels tempt the sacrilegious to risk their lives swarming up the steeply sloping sides; and on many pagodas a broad circle of spiked metal is fixed a little below the summit with a view to foiling the impious robber. The outlines of some pagodas are picked out with large electric bulbs, either white or parti-coloured, so that all night a steadfast symbol burns over city or fields and guides and cheers the lonely wanderer on his way. It is strange to see such a pyramid

of lamps reared above an open countryside and to realize that the pagoda must have its own means for generating the power. Monasteries, too, are plentiful. There are swarms of monks, some of them serious students of the Pali scriptures or instructors of youth, others fugitives from poverty, enmity or justice, who have sought asylum under the saffron robe.

That the Burmese are an artistic race is evidenced by their clothes, their pagodas and their other buildings. Their lacquer work also is remarkable. The artist will set to his task on a large round box or bowl. The background is a conventional brick-red; the bands round it will eventually present intricate patterns in different colours. Without any model before him he scratches with a metal stilus at incredible speed every point or line that is to be of one colour, say green. The whole article is then smeared with green pigment, which is presently removed, the pigment adhering only in the scratches. The article is then buried in a cool cellar for a fortnight to allow the pigment to set. It is then brought up again and the process is repeated on all points or lines that are to be yellow. And so on till the whole picture (which may be an elaborate design of men and animals) is completed. The marvellous thing is the rapidity and certainty with which the craftsman works. The result is rich but less pleasing than simpler forms, such as a black background with here and there the suggestion of a flower in pale colour. The Burmese appreciate flowers. At the foot of the stairs leading to the platform of a pagoda there will be seen masses of flowers, artistically and temptingly arranged, for sale to the worshippers. Beautiful imitation flowers are also made for decorations on festive occasions. I once had to take a night journey from Rangoon to Moulmein. Every station had been decorated in sign of welcome. A wealth of artificial flowers hung from the roofs; and nothing garish about

them; the flowers would be all of one shape and one hue, a colourful but subdued composition. The platforms were crowded, largely with children in their best clothes, and that up to midnight and again through the small hours. Indeed, the welcome became embarrassing. For I had to get out of the carriage at every station to listen to a speech or watch a *pwe*. I could have no sleep at all. Nor could the children; but they seemed to bear the fatigue better than I. In consequence of all this the train was three hours late at Moulmein. But nobody seemed to mind that.

If life in Burma has cosmopolitan features, Madras on the other hand appears, at least outwardly, to have remained purely and persistently Indian. This seems the more surprising because it is the part of India in which British settlements were first established, and knowledge of the English language has become so widespread on the Coromandel coast that the porter who takes your luggage at the station (though he is probably classed as illiterate) is quite likely to address you in English. Yet the British impact seems to have had less influence here than in provinces which experienced it later. The fact is that British interests were drawn elsewhither at an early stage. Commercial interests preferred maritime cities possessed of better harbourage than could be found on the Madras coasts. Clive's victories in the south having played their part, military activity was eventually concentrated on the north-west. Historians, archaeologists and tourists were attracted to the seats of the Mughal Emperors, the relics of vanished civilizations, the splendours of Saracenic architecture and the romantic castles of Rajputana. The centre of gravity moved away. Madras was left in the lurch and was sneeringly alluded to as a backwater or as 'the benighted Presidency'. The sneer was undeserved. Centuries ago the Madrassi had discovered a suitable way of life; he is

satisfied with it and he sticks to it. He did not borrow the superficial trappings of Europe. But this is far from implying that he is unprogressive; and in more essential matters he has shown himself ready to learn.

Here are three cases in point. He learned from Europeans the value of training those who intend to adopt teaching as a profession. The Europeans who established in Madras training colleges for secondary teachers were pioneers in this branch of education; for no such institutions had at that time been founded or even thought of in England.<sup>1</sup> The experiment took root. The Madrassis have maintained the tradition, with the result that the teachers understand their job and the secondary schools of Madras are the best in India.

In the education of girls, too, Madras shows more progress than other provinces. The number of girls at school in the Presidency is the highest, as also is the amount of money spent on girls' education. The only province which approaches Madras in respect of numbers is Bengal, where, although the number of institutions for girls is more than five times that in Madras, the total attendance is substantially smaller and the amount spent on them is far less.

Another point in which Madras takes the lead is in the spread of Christianity. There are more Christians in that Presidency than in all the rest of India put together. The Syrian Church was established on the Malabar coast in the early centuries of the Christian era. Then came the Nestorians. But the great number of conversions dates from recent times and is due to missionary zeal, helped no doubt by the desire of those who are lowest in the scale of

<sup>1</sup> This was not the only educational novelty initiated in Madras. Near the close of the eighteenth century an Anglican Chaplain, seeing the paucity of teachers, invented the 'monitorial system', in which the more advanced pupils were utilized to instruct the less advanced. The system had a vogue for a time but was eventually abandoned as faulty.

caste to escape from a degrading position. The Jesuits have been particularly successful; about half the Christians in the Presidency are Roman Catholics.

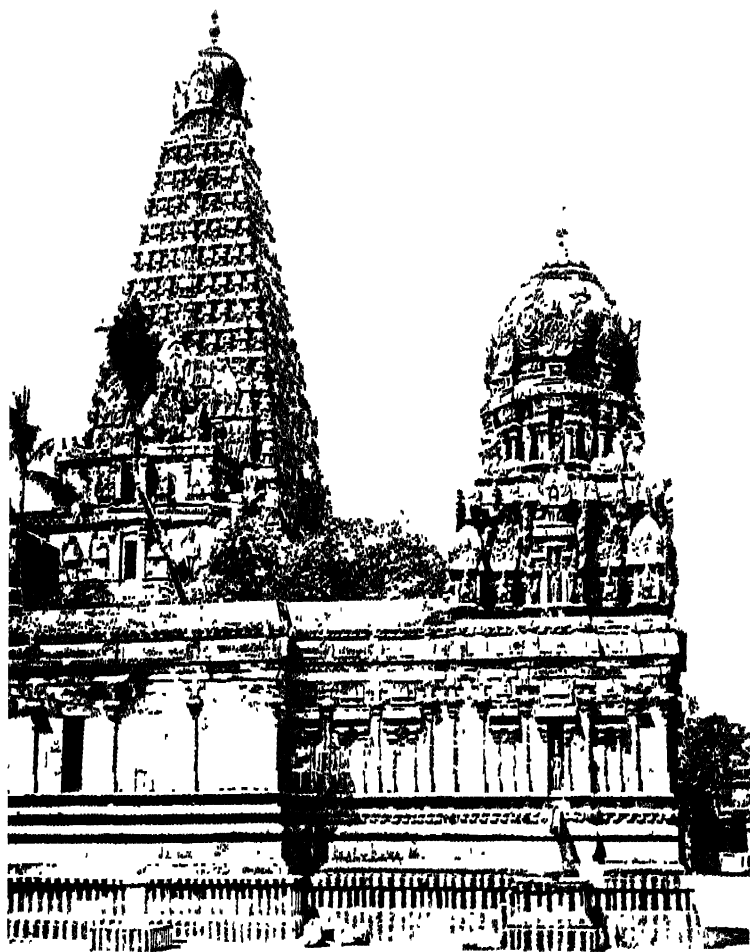
The Roman Catholic missionaries have presented the Bible stories in local colouring, and have adapted the customs which they found to enforce the lessons which they preached. I once lighted on a significant instance of their methods. I had been invited to inspect a village which was regarded as a good sample of the simple town-planning in which the Madrassi excels. In company with the village elders I had visited the school, the infirmary and other buildings of note. Our tour, begun in the early morning, occupied more time than I had expected. The sun had grown hot and I had grown hungry; I was glad to find myself walking back to the house where I was staying. But the realization of my dream of a cool room and some breakfast was doomed to postponement. A crowd of boys blocked the path. They described themselves as Christians and implored me to come and see their settlement. I couldn't refuse, though the visit involved a long and dusty walk, quite out of the direction for breakfast, towards a line of mud wall resembling a fortress, above which rose a respectably antiquated tower. This was the centre of the local Christian community, with church, school, vicarage and accommodation for some of the families. The priest, Father Fernandez, attired in surplice and topee and wearing a complexion swarthier than that of most of his flock, stood waiting for me at the massive portico. After greetings, while we were passing through into the courtyard, my eye was caught by an object parked in a big recess between the outer and inner walls—for the wall was double, with space enough within the two sides for store-houses and dwellings. The object was undoubtedly what is commonly known as a Jugger-naut car. The priest unhesitatingly admitted that it was.



'And do you', I asked, 'put the images of the Virgin and Saints on it during festivals and run it round the city?' The priest seemed pleased at my perspicacity and replied that they certainly did so. 'And I see you have surmounted the car with the Cross.' The priest beamed with delight that I had noticed it. I murmured: 'Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean'; and Father Fernandez cast his eyes up to heaven in ecstasy. Some may disapprove such methods. But, after all, the missionaries were only following the advice sent by Pope Gregory to St. Augustine for furthering the conversion of our own ancestors—that he should not break down the temples of the idols, but only the idols themselves, and that he should sprinkle the temples with holy water, build altars and deposit relics, so that the people should not see their temples spoilt but, forsaking their errors and acknowledging and honouring the true God, they might with the more readiness haunt their wonted places.<sup>1</sup>

Some maintain that the Madrassi is the cleverest of the races that inhabit India. His mind may be less nimble in dialectical skill than the Bengali's, but it has a sound practical bent. This shows itself in various ways, among others in his aptitude for town-planning, which is applied not only to villages but also on a larger scale to cities. A splendid example is the city of Srirangam, which is laid out in regular squares, square within square, diminishing in area as the centre is approached, and there culminating in a stupendous temple. That temple, and those at Madura, Tanjore and elsewhere are proof of great capacity in building. The Tanjore temple, built a thousand years ago, has a tower (*goparum*) 190 feet high, which is capped by an enormous dome-shaped stone—I hesitate

<sup>1</sup> Ut dum gens ipsa eadem fana non videt destrui, de corde errorem deponot et, Deum verum cognoscens et adorans, ad loca quae consuevit familiarius concurrat. (Bede, *Opera Historica*, Book I, chapter xxx.)



*Tanjore: The Shrine of the Great Temple*



to say how many tons in weight. The tower may be of rather later date than the rest of the temple; but anyway the raising of that stone to such a position at a time when mechanical appliances were rudimentary must have demanded consummate skill. It is to south India, too, that the Buddhist carvings at Ellora belong; and Madras is famous for its beautiful metal images. Of these last, the Dancing Shivas (a specimen of which I was fortunate enough to acquire and gave to the Calcutta Museum) are full of life and agile grace. Truly the Madrassi has made his contribution to the artistic treasures of mankind.

Impressive as is the size of the Madras temples, their over-elaborate embellishment and the fact that they are the expression of a religion not easily grasped by the western mind, render their appeal to the European less potent than that of the great Islamic buildings. The Muslims aimed at dignity and simplicity, and symbolized in mosque and tomb a faith which, however alien from our own, yet has associations common to all 'Children of the Book'. Agra with its three adjuncts, Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's tomb, and the Taj Mahal, will always be regarded by many visitors as the gem among Indian cities. It would have distinction enough if it possessed no more than its Fort, so grand and grim without, so richly encrusted with marble and cunning work within. The Taj Mahal owes much of its charm to its setting in a formal garden on the bank of the Jumna and to its noble gateways. The tomb itself is a thing of exquisite beauty, whether viewed as a whole or examined in detail, whether it appear as a dream of purest white marble or as a treasure-house of inlaid agate, bloodstone and jasper. Yet, in my humble opinion, the palm for perfection should be awarded to the Pearl Mosque within the Fort—a model of proportioned symmetry dependent on no adornment or external feature.

These buildings and the Great Mosque at Delhi mark the culmination of a slowly developed style, which adopted features from Hindu and other schools of architecture. This growth and this tolerant capacity for imbibing foreign elements form another contrast to the temples of Madras, which are built in a single and self-dependent style. The Taj may, or may not, owe something to Italian craftsmanship. But the deserted city at Fatehpur Sikri, many of whose buildings stand intact to-day, exhibits a hybrid style characteristic of Akbar's cosmopolitan tendencies; and his tomb at Sikandara, both in its shape suggestive of a compressed pagoda (or a gigantic wedding-cake) and in the carvings upon the splendid sarcophagus, exhibits Chinese influence. The sarcophagus was spared when the Jats rifled the tomb of their conqueror; for the Emperor's body was buried beneath the floor of the lowest tier of the mausoleum and the sarcophagus stood, and still stands, in the topmost storey, together with the pedestal in which, it was sometimes said, the Koh-i-noor diamond was deposited—almost certainly a fable; for the pedestal seems to have been intended for support of the lamp which ever burned by night beside this memorial shrine.

Very different is the Golden Temple, deservedly so named, at Amritsar. The Sikhs have here poured upon their one great shrine all the wealth and devotion which might have been dispersed among numerous places of worship. The temple stands in the middle of a sheet of water and is approached by a causeway. I once happened to be at Amritsar during a Sikh festival, when crowds were thronging across the causeway. I decided to see what the ceremony was like. Some of the tall bearded Sikhs who were gathered at the landward end of the causeway scowled disapprovingly at sight of an unbeliever intruding upon this central sanctuary of their religion. But

it was obvious that the majority welcomed or at least tolerated my presence; so I had no hesitation in going forward. In the shrine a priest was seated, with assistants about him, in front of a large copy of the *Granth* or sacred book which forms the one tangible object of veneration among these monotheists. He was receiving the offerings, which, since most of the worshippers were poor, generally consisted of a copper or two; and he bestowed on each of them some small object, it might be the petal of a flower, which had been hallowed by touching the sacred book. Of course it was incumbent on me, having come so far, to make an offering, and I felt that I could conscientiously do so without appearing to bow myself in the house of Rimmon, but simply as a gesture in accord with the policy of toleration which is pursued by the British *Sirkar*; and I felt likewise that as a limb of that *Sirkar* I must make the offering a substantial one. So I pulled out a twenty-rupee note and handed it to the priest. The effect was instantaneous and to me embarrassing. The priest stopped the procession, loudly proclaimed the amount of the gift, and gave me in recognition of it a white silk puggree edged with gold (I still possess it) which had been lying on the *Granth*. At the same moment, obviously at the priest's order, a band in the background struck up what may have been intended for 'God Save the King'. When the demonstration was over, the procession passed on, leaving the temple by a back way; and I went along with it.

I could go on describing Lahore, or Peshawar with its gardens of iris and rose and the dark hills beyond leading to the Khyber of tragic memory. Or we might journey through the Bolan Pass into Baluchistan, where old underground channels (they must be underground, else the water would otherwise evaporate in the thin dry air) enable a valley which is largely desert to produce delicious peaches and grapes. Or we might explore ancient and unexpected

civilizations in Taxila, where ruins in the classical style make us realize that this part of India was ruled by Bactrian Greeks for a century and a half, and where later invaders, who slaughtered Buddhist monks and burned their monasteries, unwittingly hardened and preserved the fine bas-reliefs of mud with which the inner walls were covered and which lay hidden by debris and sand till the loving care of Sir John Marshall restored them to light and sight. Or we might step yet farther back among the remnants of cities which a forgotten people raised in the Indus valley five thousand years ago. But the fascination of Indian antiquities and architecture has carried me out of my course. We must return to more human contacts, and this time in an Indian State.

History has created some curious anomalies in the Indian States. Hyderabad, where most of the inhabitants are Hindu, is ruled by a Muslim descendant of the great Asaf Jah, who was Governor of the Deccan under the Mughal Emperors but made himself independent early in the eighteenth century. The opposite is the case in Kashmir, where the course of events has ordained a Hindu monarch over a population of a million and a half out of whom only some 70,000 are Hindus and the remainder, with the exception of a few Sikhs and Buddhists, are Muslims. For centuries the Kashmiris were an oppressed people, governed at one time by Muslims (the earlier of whom effected mass conversions to Islam), at another by Sikhs, and finally by Hindus. Towards the close of the sixteenth century Kashmir became part of the Mughal Empire. With the weakening of that empire it fell into the hands of the ruler of Afghanistan and thence into the hands of the Lion of the Punjab. At the end of the First Sikh War Ranjit Singh's successor was unable to pay the indemnity of a crore and a half of rupees, and in lieu there-

of made over to the British a large tract of territory including Kashmir. The British knew very little about Kashmir and had no desire to take over a remote and mountainous country. So they handed it over to the Hindu ruler of the neighbouring State of Jammu, who in return paid to the British the amount of the indemnity. Thus was created a dual State, Jammu and Kashmir. The handful of Hindu Pandits gave the downtrodden Muslims of Kashmir a rough time, permitting no security of land tenure and exacting forced labour. These and other abuses were in time remedied—a process with which the name of the late Sir Walter Lawrence is honourably connected.

This brief sketch is necessary in order to explain how I became acquainted with Kashmir and so gained some experience of the inner working of an Indian State. Though the lot of the Muslims had been vastly improved, it was felt that greater educational facilities were necessary to raise their status and self-esteem. The Durbar (which means the Maharaja assisted by the advice of his Ministers) accordingly invited me to make a report on what should be done. In this they no doubt acted under some mild pressure on the part of the British Resident, a splendid officer who possessed a full measure of the tact, persuasive power and force of character requisite for the proper discharge of what he deemed his duty. The sketch is also necessary to show that one of the many Muslims who came to press their case before me was justified in saying: 'You British sold us for a crore and a half; so you ought to look after our interests.' My experiences in Bengal having inspired me with a lively sympathy for Muslims, I launched out upon the task with a zest which made some of the State officials rather nervous. But the Durbar showed itself fair-minded; and my report on the subject, while it shared the fate of most reports in failing to gain full acceptance, yet produced, so I learned afterwards, substantial improvement.



The inquiry being into the whole system of education in the dual State, I had to investigate affairs in Jammu as well as in Kashmir. I started out with modest camp equipment in that part of the State which borders on the north of the Punjab and where the inhabitants, though belonging to the State of Jammu, are in race, physique and manners indistinguishable from Punjabis. I was warned by the local officials not to bring my own horses—a wise precaution. The terrain consists of mounds of clay rising perhaps a couple of hundred feet above the plain and intersected by steep gullies. Local ponies were provided, which were accustomed to the steep narrow paths and to the tumultuous welcomes which awaited me at each village. Far off I would espy a little group on the watch for me. These proved to be veterans, fine-looking old fellows who had donned their uniforms and medals (often including the Indian Order of Merit) for the occasion. Their welcome is hearty but couched in the dignified and restrained manner of their kind. They mount their ponies and the cavalcade moves off. Then the fireworks begin, all home-made as the veterans proudly declare. At first a series of rockets which rise and explode in the air, each leaving a little cloud of white smoke which hangs clear and picturesque against the cloudless blue. The display gains crescendo as we near the habitations and culminates in an orgy of squibs and crackers when we ascend the narrow path into the village. No horse unaccustomed to this violent form of *feu de joie* would have stood it for a moment but would have precipitated himself and rider into the ravine below. Arrived in the little market-place, we all dismount. The whole male population of the village is already assembled, and the women are contriving to participate in the proceedings without unduly disclosing their presence. The males are all old men or boys, save for a handful of wounded (the time is that of the First Great

War) sent back from the front. The land in this locality is poor, and failures of the monsoon are frequent. The people make up for these adverse conditions by taking service in the Indian army or the Kashmir army. Every man is a soldier even in time of peace; and a fine martial race they are. And now one realizes how intense are their interest in the war and their loyalty to the allied cause. Newspapers come rarely here; and their contents are scanty and unreliable. The opportunity of having in their midst a Sahib fresh from the seat of government and primed with the latest news is by no means to be missed. So before getting to work I am bombarded with questions, all the villagers intent upon the answers. The news of any allied success is greeted with a deep rumble of satisfaction. Very touching is the devotion of these folk to the King-Emperor, to the British connexion and to the memory of the officers of their old regiments. What of the Colonel of such-and-such a regiment? He must be very old now; but if he's still alive he will certainly manage to get to the war somehow. And what of young Captain So-and-so? Is he still with the regiment? And so on. The people in their grave, courteous way are so friendly, so obviously take one as granted, conferring as it were the freedom of their own little township, that, when one has to leave and, again accompanied by the elders, reaches the village boundary, it costs quite a pang to say good-bye.

Very pleasant were the visits to those villages. The only drawback was the climate, the hot weather being well advanced, and little or no shade for tents. So it was a relief to arrive at the capital town and get under a *pukka* roof. The city of Jammu is a grim place, with a grim castle across the river, and in the castle a grim oubliette where in olden time the prisoners were lowered down to become food for rats. Soon, however, we are off again on the long ride to Kashmir. By 'we' I mean myself and

Major-General Bishan Das of the Kashmir army, who is Minister for Education and Public Works and has been sent to Jammu to meet me and guide my goings. At first the way ascends gradually through jungle, at this time of year parched and leafless. And yet suddenly, as you come round a corner, your eyes are refreshed by sight of a cataract of palest pink oleanders sweeping down the hillside to the level of the road. They are growing in a torrent-bed. The stream is dried up but sufficient moisture remains in the soil below to nourish a thick growth of these delicate flowers. Then comes a forest of pomegranates. The trees are just in bloom—a glorious expanse of crimson. The country becomes wilder. We cross the Chenab river and are confronted by the mighty mountains of Kistawar. Now there remains only one march before the border of Kashmir is reached over the Banihal Pass, which, rising to a height of over 11,000 feet, had in those days to be crossed by a narrow path cut like a trace in the precipitous side of a deep gorge. (A road has now been constructed over the pass.) The Durbar had thoughtfully dispatched to Jammu two steeds, one of them a fine charger from the cavalry stables to carry me where the going was good, the other a skewbald hill pony for steep or rocky places. Up till now I had always ridden the former, whose only fault among many virtues was the habit, common enough in Walers, of shying and hog-jumping at any traffic met on the way. I had assigned the pony to a young Punjabi whom I had brought with me as stenographer. On waking in the morning, the first thing I saw was the liver and white of that pony clearly defined against the dark hillside. The youth, foreseeing a long march, had started off at click of dawn before I had opportunity to tell him I should want the pony that day. The General mounted his own sure-footed pony—though so narrow and tricky was the path that one could go only at

a snail's pace and 'but for the honour and glory of it we might as well have walked'. So of course it was incumbent on me to get on the back of the charger and enjoy the felicity of looking all day long from that high perch over the unguarded edge of the track into the sheer depth below with the knowledge that, if a little cascade of pebbles should slither down from the steep slope above, the horse would assuredly shy, and there was nowhere for him to shy into except a thousand feet of emptiness. The only places where I could dismount with a show of decorum were landslides; there we both had to step across the breaks in the path on planks and then persuade our beasts to do likewise. I confess that when, late in the afternoon, we reached a bit of less precarious ground at the head of the pass, my head was giddy. Here there were stone shelters for such as might be caught in a blizzard while crossing. We chose a clear space among patches of snow and sat down feeling cold and hungry. We had started early on tea and toast, and our breakfasts, slowly carried up the ascent, were still far behind. However, the inhabitants of some scattered huts kindly brought us large brass cauldrons of hot, thick green tea.

Next morning we walked up the steep gradient that led to the summit and looked down upon the valley of Kashmir. What a change of scene from yesterday! Instead of the black precipices of a forbidding canyon, we beheld a prospect of wooded hillsides and, 5,000 feet below, a wide expanse of terraced rice-fields and orchards. We descend through timber curiously reminiscent of the trees of my own north country. The ground is bright with flowers; and the General and the local magnates who had gathered near the top to welcome us are much amused when I scramble down from the path to pluck a blossom from an acre of Crown Imperial lilies that densely clothe the slope.

Kashmir is a paradise of trees and flowers. There flourishes the Chenar, reputed to be the most beautiful of all trees, like a perfectly shaped, thickly foliated elm and leaves like those of the sycamore. The straight roads are lined with glorious avenues of poplar; and the angle at the far end of the avenue is always closed by a glint of snowy mountain. Sericulture is one of the chief industries of the valley; the villages are surrounded by groves of mulberry. The large delicate walnuts need no removal of the skin and are so common that they are eaten at meals instead of bread. Wild roses grow profusely; and the choicest cultivated roses seem to bear larger and shapelier blooms than in Europe. There are masses of white May-blossom, scattering the same scent that is familiar in English country lanes. And the irises! Houses are roofed with irises planted in a thin layer of soil laid upon the shingles. Riding through woodland, one suddenly comes on a clearing thickly covered with the Persian iris, either all white or all purple. It is a Muhammadan burial-ground; and the common name for the iris is the Persian word *mazar-posh*, 'the garment of the graveyard'.

No wonder the Mughal Emperors loved this land and sought here an occasional retreat from the stifling plains of Hindustan. They longed for a sight of the snow and a draught of the cool water that bubbles up in the great springs. These springs are a feature of the cup-like valley, into which the encircling snow-clad mountains press their moisture. They are like small lakes; and the streams to which they give birth start as full-fledged rivers at the source. As the Mughals adorned Agra, Lahore and Delhi with mighty fortifications and mosques, so here in this holiday resort they reared pavilions above the springs and planted pleasure gardens on the banks of the Dal Lake. Those gardens are a model of planning; long avenues of Chenar trees lead up in terraces from the



*Poplar Avenue in Kashmir*




waterside to some superb glimpse of mountain, forest and snow.

But the chief glory of Kashmir dwells in the lofty ranges that girdle it in from the world. While I was there my old friend Sir Valentine Chirol paid me a long visit. When my work lay near the waterways I was able to accommodate him in a house-boat. One day we had to cross the Wular Lake. The boatmen like to get this journey done early in the morning; otherwise they are liable to encounter the strong wind which is apt to rise in the later hours and may easily capsize a house-boat. We entered the lake about 5 a.m. Chirol and I sat on the roof of the boat. To the north towered the mighty forms of Haramukh and his giant brothers, silhouetted black against the dawning sky. Then arrows of lurid flame glanced out between the peaks. Slowly the snow-fields woke from their dark slumber, blushing with a warm rosy radiance. The deep rose turned to gold. Now the whole heaven seemed to expand from north to south, from east to west, into a dome of light, quiet and clear; and the gold upon the mountains turned to silver. We sat rapt in wonder as the majestic pomp unfolded itself. At last, when a servant came up to the roof and announced breakfast, Chirol broke silence. 'I have visited most parts of the world, but never have I seen anything to equal that.' Soon afterwards my duties took me away from the region of lakes and rivers into the north-western part of the State, not often seen by visitors. There the scenery is gentler, modest hills and much woodland, not unlike the lowlands of Scotland, with here and there a quiet reed-fringed mere. But ever to the north looms the unconquered mass of Nanga Parbat.

I was sorry to turn my back on Kashmir—the more so since, when I had finished my work and went to say good-bye to the Maharaja, he accused me of not having visited Gilgit. I pointed out that there would be little or nothing



for me to do there. But he insisted that I must see Gilgit and promised to have arrangements made for me. Now such a journey could in reality have one and only one object—Himalayan shooting; and it would be sport pursued under the most auspicious conditions. But I felt I must go on leave, not on any pretence of duty. Three months of leave were due to me. I telegraphed to headquarters asking to be allowed to take it. The reply was a stern refusal and an order to return at once to undertake some urgent work. So I lost a golden opportunity of hill shooting in a sportsman's paradise and made my way sadly back to my own office desk.



## *Chapter XII*

### DELHI

THE ancient monuments of India, as I first saw them, were in a sad plight. Uncared for, unkempt, falling into decay, they lent an air of desolation to the landscape and seemed, unconscious of the present, to brood in melancholy solitude over a forgotten past. It was Lord Curzon who began their preservation, imbuing them with new life and making them worthy memorials of bygone glory. The amount of industry and patience which that great Viceroy bestowed upon this labour of love is almost incredible; and, when his other achievements have sunk into the mists of oblivion, the beauties which he renewed will still shine in marble and stone and reflect glamour on his name.

Delhi was a notable example of this ruin and neglect and of Curzon's efforts to repair the ravages of time, war and vandalism. There is here an area of some seventy square miles covered with the mosques, fortresses and tombs raised by the rajas, sultans, emperors and nobles who successively wielded sway during a thousand years. These monuments, formerly standing like gaunt spectres in a wilderness, are now, thanks to the movement initiated by Curzon, carefully preserved; their surroundings are cleared and, where possible, planted with shrubs and flowers; and it is pleasant to see crowds of Indians on a holiday wander admiringly among them and gaze in wonder on the mighty Kutb Minar and the Iron Pillar of unrusting metal. To some indeed the older buildings, even as refurbished, may appear austere, harsh, even terrifying. The ruined walls of a city of the Tughlaqs, a dynasty whose very name sounds like an echo of their stern despotism, is a case in point. Nor is Islamic architecture, even in its

late and more florid style, pleasing to all. I once had the interesting experience of spending a week under the same roof with M. Clemenceau during his tour in India. On the day of my arrival I found myself seated next him at lunch and, knowing that he shared this distaste and had recently visited the Taj Mahal, I dared to draw *le Tigre* by asking his opinion of that superb sepulchre. The draw was highly successful. He replied impetuously, waving in the air his hands clad, as they always were, in white cotton gloves. 'It is all repetition. It is stupid. The ladies—some say you should see it at 10.30 p.m., others say at 10.30½! Pah! It is ladies' work, mere repetition.' Clemenceau was a great admirer of Buddhist art, which rejoices in sculpture, familiar scenes and natural figures; and this prejudiced him against the plain conventional features used by Muslim builders, who, limited by the prohibition against delineation of human or animal forms, were content to decorate with geometrical patterns or Arabic lettering in shallow relief, and at a later period with inlay of flowers wrought in coloured marbles. It has been said of them that they 'built like giants and finished their work like jewellers'. Their flat-surface decorations are exquisite; but, if they shone as jewellers (and here they received some aid from Hindu artificers), it was as giants that they excelled. Decoration was to them of minor value; their spirit, fostered by a stalwart faith and in the wide solemnity of the desert, expressed itself in large simple effects.

And what a story do these monuments of Delhi enshrine! The name of the fortress that closes the eastward view from Government House in New Delhi recalls Indraprastha, the city of the Mahabharata, and takes us back to legendary times. Between the famous Ridge and the foot-hills of the Himalaya lies the gap through which successive conquerors have poured into the plains of Hindustan. There, on the field of Kurukshetra, raged the epic fight between

the Kauravas and the Pandavas; and there the Rajput chivalry, led by the romantic Prithvi Raja, was overthrown at the close of the twelfth century by the Muslim invaders. The Muslims used the stones, carved with images, in the great mosque which they constructed at Old Delhi. Thereafter city after city arose as caprice suggested or necessity demanded, till the remains of six cities strewed the plain; and the seventh, built by the Emperor Shahjahan in the seventeenth century, with its noble mosque and palace, still stands busy and populous, known as Shahjahanabad or, more commonly, as 'Delhi'—neither Old Delhi nor New Delhi, but just Delhi. The styles of architecture in these cities are of historical significance and exhibit an interesting development from early and austere forms up to the sumptuous grace of Saracenic buildings. Tragic memories haunt sepulchre and palace. Humayun's magnificent tomb, soaring above a peaceful garden, its massive marble dome gleaming against the blue sky, holds the bodies of two murdered Emperors; and here it was that the last Mughal Emperor and his two doomed sons were found in hiding during the Mutiny. Shahjahan's splendid palace, which had seen the pomp of the Great Mughal in his might, saw also his misfortune in decay; in the bejewelled pavilion of the Diwan-i-Khas, round whose walls still runs the legend: 'If on the face of earth there is a Heaven, it is here and it is here and it is here', a savage Rohilla tore out the eyes of the Emperor Shah Alam. A pathetic spot is the shrine of Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, who was a strange mixture of saint and politician. Despite his questionable reputation, such sanctity attaches to his tomb that it is clustered about by the graves of the most illustrious in the land. Among them is that of the Princess Jahanara, Shahjahan's faithful daughter, who shared her dethroned father's imprisonment in the fort of Agra, whence they gazed with wistful eyes upon the pearl-like loveliness of

the most glorious tomb ever raised over mortal dust. Far humbler was the memorial which the Princess craved—and yet found not. Her prayer was like that of Christina Rossetti:

Be the green grass above me,  
With showers and dewdrops wet.

I know not if her wish is now fulfilled; but when I first saw Jahanara's tomb neglect or drought or both had robbed it even of the modest splendour that she asked.

'Let nought but weeds adorn my resting-place,  
For lowly hearts no lordlier covering crave.'

So spake a Princess of imperial race.

Her words, though not the weeds, renown her grave.

Those who mourned the removal of the capital to Delhi and lamented the loss of the social delights and flesh-pots of Calcutta did not fail to reinforce their views by pointing to the tragic traditions of a place which had become the cemetery of departed empires. Their lugubrious prophecies were near getting further support on the very occasion of the formal transfer of Delhi and the surrounding territory, previously part of the Punjab, to the Government of India for use as the capital of all India. What might have been a catastrophe was happily turned into a display of noble courage. It happened in the Chandni Chowk—a street of sinister memories; for along it a brother of Aurangzeb had been borne to suffer death at the merciless Emperor's order, while the people lined the way lamenting the fate of a popular prince; and there in 1739 the Persian monarch, Nadir Shah, had sat and watched a great massacre of the city's inhabitants by his troops. Lady Hardinge afterwards described to me her experiences—how the procession was passing through this street, when she heard above the music of the bands and the cheering of the crowds a noise like an explosion, and the elephant

on which she and the Viceroy were riding suddenly halted; how Lord Hardinge called to the mahout in Hindustani to urge the animal on; how for a moment it seemed as though there were nothing amiss. Then she had glanced behind and beheld in the back of the howdah the shattered body of an orderly who had been blown to pieces by the bomb. Filled with a sudden fear, she looked at her husband. He sat erect, but his face was blanched and from a big gash torn down the back of his tunic the blood was flowing. Another instant, and he fell forward unconscious from loss of blood. 'We lifted Charles down from the elephant and got him home,' she said. 'We feared the worst. But I just kept going till he was in bed and in good medical hands.' The surgeon extracted an almost incredible number of pieces of metal out of the Viceroy's shoulders and the back of his neck. Nevertheless he quickly recovered from what was nearly a descent into the grave and was at once at work again, strenuous as ever.

Meanwhile, in one of the courts of Shahjahan's palace the members of the legislature were awaiting the arrival of the procession, which presently came streaming through the mighty passage which forms the entry from the outer gate. A battery had just arrived in the court, followed by a squadron of cavalry. Suddenly the battery paused, the cavalry paused. A mere hitch, perhaps; intervals are apt to develop in long processions and call for a halt. The cavalry, waiting at the mouth of the passage, made a fine picture—grey chargers, glittering kettle-drums, uniforms standing out against sun-smitten walls of red sandstone, and, above all, the brilliance of a cloudless sky. But the pause lasts too long. Then an ominous clatter of hoofs along the passage; hurried discussions; a rumour goes round that Lady Hardinge has been wounded to death, the Viceroy has escaped injury—very near a complete reversal of the fact. What followed was characteristic of

British temper—phlegmatic and dogged. The procession began to move again. The elephants came and knelt down while the high officials descended from their backs. We all went forward into the Diwan-i-Am, the Mughal hall of public audience. In place of the wounded Viceroy, Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson took his stand under the 'Seat of the Shadow of God on Earth', and the ceremony proceeded as though nothing untoward had happened. But there was one exception. The Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, a student of oriental literature and an eloquent orator, having delivered his set speech, laid aside the typescript and began to talk. So apposite was his talk that its publication in the press was forbidden. It swept through the audience like a strong wind. Formality melted in emotion. The Sirdars of the Punjab gave vent to hoarse shouts of approval, half drew their sabres from the scabbards and rattled them menacingly. One of them turned to me and said: 'Do you know what we should have done if I and my followers had been in front of that Bank? There wouldn't have been left a soul to come out of it alive.'<sup>1</sup>

Even the most tragic occasion may yield a humorous incident. Sir Guy had retained, as an item in his political uniform, the old-fashioned conical helmet heavily embossed with gold (vulgarly known as a jelly-bag), which had been generally discarded in favour of a less rococo head-dress.

<sup>1</sup> It was thought that the bomb was thrown from a neighbouring Bank. But apparently this was not so, and the Sirdar's vengeance would have been misdirected. A youth who was brought to trial in the Delhi Conspiracy case and was eventually sentenced to death, petitioned the Viceroy for mercy. The petition was rejected; and the day before his execution the youth declared that it was he himself who, disguised as a Muhammadan woman (he was in fact a Hindu) and standing on the pavement in front of the Bank, had thrown the bomb which just missed the Viceroy and landed in the back of the howdah, the splinters hitting Lord Hardinge's shoulders and neck which projected above the partition. Was his story true, or was it the bravado of one about to die?

Perhaps he was a trifle elated at finding himself in the Viceroy's place. Anyway he inadvertently put on the helmet back to front as he was leaving the hall, so that the elongation which was intended as a protection to the nape of the neck descended over his forehead. A European legislator, who was seated near me, murmured under his breath: 'He put his hat the wrong way on because his head was turned.' Later on, after the first horror at the outrage had subsided, legends grew up about it. One was invented about the late Lady O'Moore Creagh, wife of the Commander-in-Chief. She was reported to have given her experiences as follows: 'We were on the elephant behind the Viceroy's elephant. I saw a flash and there was a noise like an explosion. The Viceroy's elephant stopped and then went on again. I said to O'Moore, "O'Moore, that was a bomb". And he said to me, "My dear, will I order a massacre?" And I stopped him.'

The ceremony just mentioned was the sequel of the announcement of the change of capital made by the King-Emperor on his visit to India to proclaim his coronation. The splendours of the Durbar at which the announcement was made have often been described. All I will say is that it was probably the most magnificent and dazzling spectacle of its kind that the eye of mortal has ever beheld. And yet I had myself seen one such sight which made on me a deeper impression—deeper perhaps because I was then young. As a schoolboy I had sat in the north transept of Westminster Abbey at the Great Queen's Jubilee of 1887. There was no open width of plain flaming with colour and flooded with sunshine beneath a dome of azure; no innumerable concourse; no gorgeous procession of Princes paying homage to their suzerain. Instead, the glimmer of light and shadow under the vaulted roof of an ancient church consecrated by custom as a national shrine; a concentration of earthly power in the persons of monarchs,



statesmen and warriors; a sense of latent strength, of continuity, of high traditions handed down through the ages. If the scene lacked the far-flung magnificence of the Delhi Durbar, it had its own unsurpassable pomp of subdued stateliness and rich solemnity.

The great event produced some pleasantries. A citizen of Delhi, whose loyal zeal outran his knowledge of idiomatic English, displayed from his house on the route which the King would take on his arrival a streamer inscribed 'Good-bye George'. Sir John Hewett, who was in charge of the Durbar arrangements, is said to have seen this decoration while motoring round the city and to have persuaded the good man to alter the form of welcome. One of the Indian employees of the Department of Commerce and Industry wrote a long poem to celebrate the royal visit and the opening, which happened at the same time, of a fine new building in Calcutta for the accommodation of that Department. He submitted it to His Majesty and also distributed a number of printed copies, one of which I received. The poem contained a couplet which has stuck in my memory:

Officers by electric lift going upstairs  
In ease and comfort manage Thy affairs.

Those whom I have already mentioned as bemoaning the change of capital declared, among other things, that British strength was maritime, that our empire in India owed its origin to commerce and that Calcutta was connected with the ocean, was a great commercial centre and was also an essentially British creation. They objected to the transfer from a city which was very much alive to one which was seemingly dead. Little did they dream of the rapid rejuvenation of that ancient seat of empire or of the miraculous growth of palaces and halls and gardens which would soon place it among the most majestic capitals of the

world. Sir Edwin Lutyens's boldly imaginative genius and Sir Herbert Baker's sense of restrained dignity have combined to produce a harmonious whole. I did not see the completion of the eighth and most magnificent of the cities of Delhi. But it was a joy to visit the work in progress and to observe the methods of two architects and the traits of two men who offered a sharp contrast—Lutyens bubbling over with fun and impish humour, Baker quiet, serious, contemplative. The well-known story about Lutyens's correspondence with Lady Hardinge is characteristic, and he himself assured me that it is true. It was Lady Hardinge's desire (and the dream has since been nobly realized) to found at Delhi a medical college for women, and she asked Lutyens to sketch her a little perspective of the future building that was to house it, expressing a preference for oriental style. Lutyens complied; but his sketch failed to give satisfaction. He replied to Lady Hardinge's criticism as follows: 'I am sorry you do not like my little picture. Perhaps you think I am not sufficiently oriental. In fact I am very oriental. I am so oriental that I wash your feet with my hair. It is true I have very little hair. But then you have very little feet.'

The advocates of Calcutta undoubtedly had something on their side; but their pleas were outweighed by the arguments in favour of the transfer to Delhi. The outlook of the ruler is influenced by those who are closest to the seat of rule; and the Bengali is to some extent *sui generis* and not a mirror of India as a whole. Delhi is in contact with two large provinces and three big blocks of Indian States—the Rajput, the Central Indian, and the Phulkian. Moreover the promotion of Bengal to a governorship was long overdue; and it would have been awkward to have two kings in Brentford. Delhi also possesses certain minor advantages which affect the individual, especially if the individual is a lover of country life, open air and sport.

Sport there is indeed round Calcutta; but it was not so accessible to the official as that to be obtained from Delhi.

Excellent wildfowling is (or at least then was) to be had in the near neighbourhood of Delhi. Many a good day did I enjoy with Sir Harcourt Butler and Sir Ludovic Porter—alas, both those faithful friends, born in the same year as myself, have long since departed to other hunting-grounds. Our favourite haunt was along the old bed of the Ganges, where there is a line of good swamps. I used to organize a shooting camp on those jheels during Christmas week, and I kept records of the bags there made. Picking out one of these records at random, I find that we (that is, four guns on two days and three guns on the other three days) bagged in five days 428 snipe, 34 black partridges, 173 quail and minor items (including two wild cats). Of course that bag may seem paltry to a man who has got his hundred couple of snipe in a single day, shooting alone over the rice-stubble fields of Bengal. The men who have done that are rare and admit that the achievement involves a terrible strain even on a calm and perfect day with birds thick on the ground and lazy from warmth and rich feeding.<sup>1</sup>

One of these occasions was memorable. About ten days before it I had to take some work to the Viceroy. When we had finished the work he said, 'I hear you're having a Christmas camp and that Sir Harcourt is going to it. I want you to give him this present from me on Christmas morning.' He handed me a sealed envelope addressed in his own hand to Sir Harcourt Butler. I could pretty well guess the contents of the envelope. For Butler's time as a Member of the Executive Council was coming to an end, and it was expected that he would receive the headship of a province. The only doubt was whether it would be the

<sup>1</sup> One of my cousins once bagged his hundred couple of snipe in a day near Lucknow—a remarkable performance.

United Provinces or Burma, in each of which there would shortly be a vacancy; and it was believed that Butler coveted the former, where he had served his apprenticeship. When we emerged from our tents on Christmas morning, I handed him the envelope. 'Here's a Christmas present for you from the Viceroy.' Then I left him to study the contents. When I returned I found him seated on the ground and scanning the letter. 'Well,' I asked, 'is it to be the U.P.s or Burma?' 'Burma,' he replied. 'Are you pleased?' 'Pleased!' he said. 'I should think I am. I've got an interesting and fascinating people, a port, a commercial community, oil, tungsten, mountains, jungles and an archipelago. What more could one wish?'

There were other jheels and sheets of water on which we got snipe and duck. In the Central Provinces I had made the acquaintance mainly of gadwalls and pintails. Round Delhi mallards were commoner than gadwalls; and there were plenty of geese, both bar-headed and grey lags. In both these parts of the country teal are numerous. On several occasions when duck-shooting, I have seen a large hawk or a kite seize the bird I had brought down and fly off before I could reach it. But the interloper never got away with his prey. The weight of the duck compelled the marauder to seek rest on the ground at intervals. So I was always able to overhaul him and eventually to get in a shot which either frightened him off empty-handed or dispatched him.

Other birds are to be found round Delhi as well as snipe, duck and geese. Among them is the imperial sand-grouse (*Pterocles arenarius*). Neither he nor the smaller species of sand-grouse (*Pterocles alchata*, *fasciatus*, *exustus*, &c.) which are found in the Central Provinces, in Iraq and elsewhere and very rarely on the east coast of England, are related to the true grouse; they are members of an entirely different family, the *Pterocloromorphae*. But the imperial sand-grouse,


unlike the lesser breeds of this family, has a faint superficial resemblance to our grouse in his general shape and his hairy legs. He is, however, smaller than the red grouse and his plumage is quite different—a rich mixture of subdued purple and gamboge. He is an excellent bird to eat. If you want to make a large bag of these fowl, you can take advantage of their dipsomaniac propensities; for it seems to be a necessity of their existence that they drink at perfectly regular times, the imperial immediately after sunrise, the smaller kinds about a couple of hours later—as though the inferiors modestly waited until the finely clad nobles had drunk their fill. They fly over the water in such dense formations that, however carefully you try to single out a bird, you can hardly avoid browning them. Later in the day they may be got in a more sporting way by driving. They lie on sandy or stony ground, themselves closely resembling stones. The best plan is to spy them out with binoculars and, hiding behind a bush, to send two or three men round to stir them up in hope that they will fly in your direction. Rajputana is the chief haunt of the imperial sand-grouse; but in a dry year I have found them in fair numbers in parts of the United Provinces adjoining Delhi.

Another noble and richly plumaged fowl of northern India is the black partridge. While the grey partridge is common throughout India, it is well known that south of a line drawn from west to east through the middle of the sub-continent painted partridges are to be found but never the black kind, and that north of it black partridges are to be found but never the painted kind. The black partridge can be walked up in long grass or bushes. Sometimes we had a day or two after him in the sugar-cane fields near Delhi. Towards the end of February, when water was drying up and wildfowling was becoming less attractive, the cutting of the canes had so far advanced

that only isolated patches were left standing. Each of these patches was a perfect rectangular oblong, some thirty yards wide and maybe a hundred or more yards long. The game which had found cover in the great areas planted with cane was now concentrated in these comparatively small patches. It was driven out by the drawing of a long rope over the tops of the canes. Two men handled the rope, beginning at one end of the patch and lobbing the rope along towards the other end. The crackling noise in the dry canes sent black partridge, quail and such-like birds flying out. One gun accompanied each of the men who worked the rope; the third gun stood at the far end. All sorts of unexpected things would appear. A whole family of peafowl would suddenly soar upwards, bursting out like a packet of rockets. A jackal might slink past the end gun, or a startled antelope dash by him.

From Delhi one also had the opportunity of going to some of the big shoots in Rajputana. (Incidentally I might mention that arrangements were made for transporting the game that was shot to cantonments and other places where it served as useful food. Similarly at our snipe shoots we had most of the birds sent in to our friends in Delhi.) I used to be a guest at the famous Bharatpur duck shoots and was once there when a record bag was made. That record was afterwards broken on a day when I had to decline the invitation to shoot because work required me to be in Calcutta. Enjoyable as those battues were by way of a variation, yet it was the quiet days with a couple of friends, when we slogged after snipe through the swamps, far removed from all pomps and ceremonies, that formed the real and delightful staple of our sport. An early start in pitch darkness. A run in the car through frosty air to our hunting-ground. Too early in the day for snipe, but just the time to stir up the duck. The cold shudder as one wades out among ice-tipped grasses into the

chilly water; the long shivering wait while the farthest gun goes round to his place. Faint splashings and gurglings of duck still shrouded in the twilight of dawn and the shreds of mist that float over the surface of the lake. Then the sound of a raising shot tells us that the farthest gun is in position. Instantly the water is furrowed with streaks as the duck, their wings noisily flapping, rise into the air. There follows a busy half-hour for the guns while the birds sweep in from every side. Now they have soared out of range, and the guns struggle back to the bank, soaked but no longer shivering, and laden with their spoil. We start off to some neighbouring swamp, while the welcome sun rises and dries our clothes. Arrived at the swamp, we open our basket and have breakfast. After that the long day of wading after snipe, with every variety of shot at the little flickering targets. All round us lies the endless plain, broken only by a distant clump of palms, bounded by the low horizon, over-arched by the vast blue vault. I look back yearningly on those joyous days and the good companions who shared with me the cold and the sunshine, the laughter and the sport.



## *Chapter XIII*

### PAPER AND POLITICS

I HAVE inflicted much on the long-suffering reader but have at least spared him dull dissertations upon the work which falls to be done in India, the main exception being the chapter about famine relief—a subject which lends itself to narrative, since the relief officer's duties take him out of doors, bring him into contact with his fellow beings, and, in my own case, placed me in surroundings likely to produce unusual incidents and inhabited by a race of interesting people. Description of a day spent among office files would be revolting alike to reader and to writer. Yet the office file bulked so largely in our lives, especially if we came to do secretariat work in Calcutta or Delhi and Simla, that it cannot entirely be ignored.

Some think that the Indian official has an easy time. As a matter of fact the burden of work is immense, especially in provinces that are under-staffed. Why are they under-staffed? The first answer is that India as a whole is cheaply run; the cost of administration compared with that of other countries is surprisingly small. The second answer is that conditions in some provinces bring more grist to the official mill and more troublesome problems to solve than in others; and the staff found adequate for the normal administrative unit elsewhere does not suffice in such cases, and the financial watchdogs growl at any plea for the admission of exceptional circumstances. The assertion that the toil is exacting does not rest solely on personal experience of my own. An Indian civilian who, after his retirement, had the good fortune to be employed in one of the government



offices in England and so well acquitted himself as to have a K.C.M.G. bestowed upon him, assured me that the amount of work with which he was called upon to deal was far smaller than that which faced him in his Indian career.

Others assert that there is too much paper work, that the Indian official sits and writes all day when he ought to be up and doing. It would be instructive to such critics if they could accompany a young officer of the I.C.S. on settlement work in the fields—a normal duty—with a shade temperature rising to 115°; or—in abnormal times—on such duties as I have described in connexion with famine. All the same, there is some foundation for this criticism. Paper work has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished—in the case, that is, of those more properly engaged upon active and constructive administration in the provinces. But this is not the fault of the man on the spot; rather it is his bane. The district officer is ground between the upper and the nether millstones. Above him (infinitely far above him) is a Secretary of State responsible to Parliament; and British public opinion awakes every now and then to the realization that there is a country called India in which Britain has somehow or other attained to a position of power and responsibility, and that this position demands justification. These doubts and misgivings are reflected in debates and questions in the House of Commons. Then the India Office in turn asks questions of the Government of India. This questioning strikes downwards till it hits the district officer. The demand for information tends to become habitual and permanent and engenders statistical tables, annual reports and such-like nuisances. While this provides agreeable occupation for assistant secretaries, it impedes work in the districts.

It is a difficult problem—how to deal with this

menace of excessive paper. There is one solution, but it is drastic. A friend of mine was appointed early in his career to be an assistant secretary under a provincial government. He entered upon his new duties with some trepidation. One day two orderlies staggered into his room with a file of colossal dimensions. He glanced at it and saw that it dealt with a high matter of state which had reached so crucial and confidential a stage that it would be unseemly for an assistant secretary to note on it. Thinking there must be a mistake, he knocked at the door of the secretary's room and informed him of the nature of the file. The secretary, an awe-inspiring personage, glared at him ominously for a moment, and then: 'What! They have brought you that file, have they? That file is lost. Never let me hear of it or see it again.' Another intentional loss of files, but actuated by a different motive, occurred when the department in which I was secretary was presided over by an Indian Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council whose official attitude was sometimes affected by political leanings and fear of the Press. I noticed that, if I submitted to him a case the decision upon which was inevitable but might meet with criticism in the nationalist newspapers, the file was not returned to me for the issue of orders. As the number of such cases mounted up, I made a 'black list', showing the date on which each had been submitted; and I periodically placed this before the Honourable Member with an urgent request for expedition. This availed nothing; and one day, when I was particularly pressing, the Member let the cat out of the bag. 'What would you do if you had to pass orders which you disliked passing?' I replied that I would let the secretary pass them. He said he couldn't do that; and yet shortly afterwards he departed to his Indian home preparatory to retirement and (while still, incidentally, drawing the high pay of his

office) told me I needn't send any papers on to him but could deal with them myself. This I accordingly did with cases as they arose; but he had gone away without disgorging those which were included in my black list. Finally, on vacating his appointment, the Member sailed for England; and one of the office hands, whom he had kept as a private secretary, returned to Simla. I took him to the house which the Member had previously occupied, and we commenced a search. There we found the missing files, in number about thirty, hidden behind cupboards or stuffed under carpets. And I had to sit up all one night going through them again.

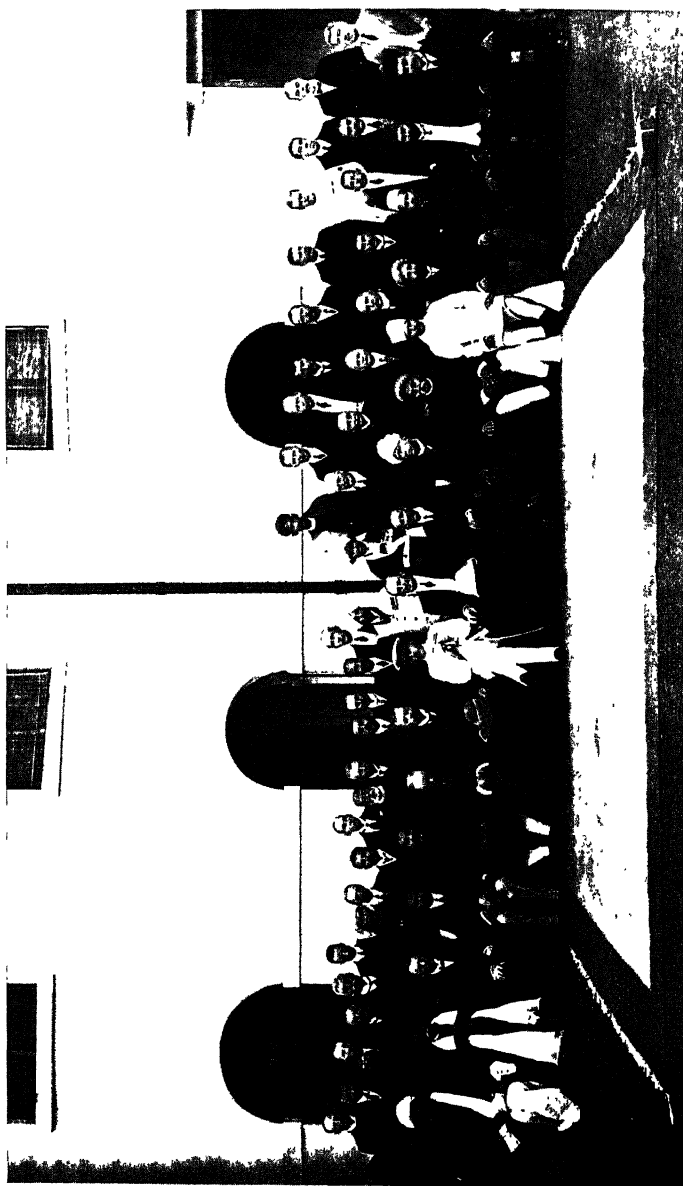
I once experienced an unintentional loss of files on a wholesale scale. I was touring in Assam; and, after voyaging for two days up the Surma River against a heavy current, I arrived at Sylhet, where I was to stay for several days of inspection, to find a collection of about a hundred files which my diligent office had sent down for me to deal with. After dinner I wearily plodded through a few of them till midnight and then went to bed, leaving the remainder stacked in one of the rooms of the circuit house, which I was occupying. Next morning my bearer awoke me before sunrise, saying that a mysterious catastrophe had happened. I hurried into the room where the papers were stacked. It was permeated by a distinctly bovine odour. I saw in the open doorway, just outlined against the faint light of dawn, the distended form of a quadruped waddling its way out. I struck a match and beheld a second bloated beast prone on the floor and apparently incapacitated by repletion. And all the files had vanished. What had happened was this. In that watery land if you want to erect a building you must first dig a big hole to get soil for raising your house above the frequent floods. The big hole fills up and becomes a tank. This circuit house was surrounded

with barbed wire to check the depredations of cattle; but the fence was not continued on the side where the tank lay. It had rained in the night; and these cows (they were three in number), deeming it no wetter in the tank than out of it, had crossed it with a view to seeing what they could pick up in the circuit house. It was my files that they picked up, and they made a clean sweep of them, eating everything except the stiff cardboard backs, which proved too solid for mastication. I stuffed these backs into the locked bags in which the files had arrived, and I addressed them to my office with a note: 'Files devoured by cattle in Sylhet; office please arrange.' We conveyed the cows to the pound, not without difficulty; and I wrote a note to the district officer suggesting that, for so heinous a crime as a ruthless destruction of government correspondence, something more than the paltry fine for trespass should be inflicted. He replied: 'No special fine can be inflicted. It is the habit of these cattle to eat paper. Only the other day they entered my house and ate an important file of the Board of Revenue.' On the completion of my tour and return to headquarters I went to see the Lieutenant-Governor to report to him the results of my journey, and I mentioned this loss of papers. He was a man of action and brightened up at once. 'Could you identify those cows?' he asked. 'For if you can I might send them down a few cartloads of their favourite provender from the secretariat.' I assured him that paper would come as a boon to any of the cattle in Sylhet.

In the secretariats of the Government of India the criticism has been less on the number of files (though that is regrettable) than on their size. A melancholy case once came before me about an invalid pension for a clerk who had been physically incapacitated through dealing with a file! But when a central government is

considering a case of general importance it naturally collects the views of provincial governments, and each of these in turn thinks proper to consult a number of local authorities and other public bodies. All these opinions must be recorded (generally in print), sifted, analysed for immediate use, and stored up in case the same question should arise at a future time. Thus the position is very different from that in London, where there is one government and not a multiplicity of largely independent governments. A juster criticism may be levelled against the interaction between the departments of the central government. Paper and time are expended in passing a file from one department to another. It may be necessary to have in writing the opinions of highly responsible officers. But the amount of noting is excessive and roused the ire of Lord Curzon, who railed against departmentalism as (so it is said) an intellectual hiatus more culpable than a moral delinquency, and remarked on a file which had worked its weary way for many months through many offices that if only Mr. A. would put on his hat and walk round for a talk with Mr. B. the matter might be settled at once. On the whole, however, the system pursued in the Government of India has much to commend it, and efforts to reduce the bulk of paper work have not been successful. In the circumstances there is bound to be a mass of correspondence; and, while Curzon's criticism has some justification, it is only fair to the generality of mankind to remember that few possess Curzon's phenomenal memory and brain-power. He had the faculty of mastering and retaining in his mind the details of a number of different and disconnected cases. There is a story that, when he was in England before entering upon his extension of office in India, and Lord Ampthill was temporarily acting as Viceroy, a lady in Simla remarked to a member of the Executive Council that she couldn't





*The Legislative Council*

imagine how the government was carried on in Lord Curzon's absence. 'My dear lady,' he replied, 'it's perfectly simple. It's just as easy for an Honourable Member to explain a case to Lord Ampthill as it was for Lord Curzon to explain the Honourable Member's case to the Honourable Member.'

It must not be thought that the written word ruled out oral discussion. There was the Legislative Council, the place of which was afterwards taken by a bicameral legislature consisting of an Assembly and a Council of State. The Legislative Council was originally an excrescence on the Executive Council of the Governor-General, to which, for legislative purposes, there was added a small number of persons whose opinions might be helpful. These added persons were known as Additional Members—a phrase which was easily abbreviated into 'Addled Members'. In course of time their number was increased and came to include elected representatives as well as persons nominated by the Governor-General. Among the latter class was a number of officials adequate for the assurance of government's policy. When I first went to Calcutta the Council (further enlarged under the Morley-Minto reforms) already contained the full statutory quota of official nominees; so I had to wait for a vacancy before I could be appointed. This was not long in coming; for the Commander-in-Chief decided that military interests were over-represented and that one officer should resign his seat. As a result I received an official document stating that the Governor-General was pleased to nominate me 'to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Lieutenant-General Sir Douglas Haig, K.C.V.O., C.B.'. The composition and title of the legislature changed, but I continued to be a member for years and eventually became, so to speak, the father of the House.



While Calcutta remained the capital of India the Legislative Council met in Government House, that noble building, on the model of Kedleston Hall, which was then the Viceroy's principal abode and is now that of the Governor of Bengal; and Warren Hastings's impressive portrait gazed down upon the members. For me the most memorable of the debates that I there attended was on Mr. Gokhale's scheme for universal elementary education. Government was fully in favour of the principle at which Gokhale aimed. But his scheme was not well worked out. The financial proposals omitted important requisites, such as the training of teachers, provision of buildings and so forth. Above all, education was a subject for the main branches of which each provincial government was primarily responsible. Though the Government of India could distribute funds for the spread and improvement of education, it was impossible, once those funds had passed into the hands of local administrations, to disentangle them from other provincial assets without inquisitorial methods and frictional interference. I had discussed the whole matter with Gokhale in the friendliest way and pointed out to him the weaknesses in his scheme. When the proposal came before the Legislative Council, Sir Harcourt Butler, the Member in charge, opposed it, but promised that provincial governments should be encouraged in any effort to accomplish the object at which it aimed. Next day I had to wind up the debate for the government, and I dealt at some length with the shortcomings of the scheme. The upshot was the defeat of Gokhale's resolution, a majority even of the non-official members voting against it. I am sorry to say that Gokhale afterwards on several occasions showed resentment for this defeat. He was a good patriot, and his opinions, as publicly and eloquently expressed, were moderate, practical and statesmanlike.

But a watchful observer could discern now and again an unguarded tone (which he instantly tried to check) in his utterances or a fierce flash in his eye, which spoke of fires smouldering below the surface and of an emotion which he had to hold in restraint. In a footnote in his little book on Indian nationalism Edwyn Bevan described Gokhale as at heart an extremist.

Parenthetically I should add that at that time the department which dealt with education was claiming, and getting, large sums out of the surpluses from the dying opium revenue and distributing them to the provinces for educational advancement and especially for elementary education. This meant, as budget time approached, a speeding up of schemes and competition with other departments for the available funds. On one of these occasions Sir Harcourt Butler suggested to me that, in addition to the grants already promised to our department, we should ask for a large sum (I think it was equal to nearly half a million sterling) to be used for non-recurring purposes such as buildings. Now he and Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson, who presided over financial affairs, did not see eye to eye on certain matters; in fact relations were at the moment a trifle strained; and Sir James (afterwards Lord) Meston, the secretary in the finance department, used to look in at my office to concoct ways of bringing 'the two old gentlemen', as he called them, into harmony. One morning Sir Harcourt, on hearing from me that no reply had come from Sir Guy about the additional grant, suggested that I should go and speak to him personally. I wrote a polite note, and a time was fixed for me to enter the lion's den. When I did so, I found the Honourable Member seated with my file containing the request on the table before him. 'I suppose you've come to ask for this extra money', he said. I replied yes. Thereupon he initialled the file,

tossed it to me and exclaimed, 'Well, you young ruffian, since you've come for it you shall have it.' I retreated rapidly, hugging the file. Perhaps Lord Curzon would have approved that way of doing business.

To return to the legislature—its meetings were often drearily dull. There was a wealth of manuscript oratory. Sometimes a member would send his intended speech beforehand to the press, and then, either because he failed to catch the President's eye, or for some other reason, did not deliver it. The next day's newspapers then reported it as part of the proceedings; and no doubt the member's constituents were gratified. Officials had to put in a good deal of attendance at the meetings. Meantime cases were piling up in their offices. Dr. Page-Roberts, the Dean of Salisbury, once well known as an eloquent preacher, came with his family on a visit to India. I had been asked to do what I could to make his stay in Delhi pleasant and, while warning him that I couldn't thereby assure him of a pleasure, I gave him tickets for the strangers' gallery. Afterwards I asked the Dean his impressions. 'It reminded me', he replied, 'of the Scripture where it says: On the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation, and in those days shall no manner of work be done.' It was a testimony to his memory that he could quote almost word for word from a rather uninteresting chapter of Exodus.

But every now and then some incident would cheer up the proceedings. In days when the influence of Manchester was still powerful, a resolution was put forward by non-official members urging the abolition of the excise which, under the aegis of free trade, had been imposed on Indian cotton piece-goods as a counter-balance to the import duty charged on the products of Lancashire. It was a hardy annual which cropped up

periodically. Official opinion was generally in favour of it; but its repercussions, should it be accepted, would so vitally affect British interests that a reference to the home government was necessary. The reply was that it should be opposed. So a whip was sent round with a view to its defeat by the official bloc.<sup>1</sup> In those days the Viceroy himself presided over the Legislative Council. If a question came to the vote the decision was by 'Aye' or 'No', individual votes being taken only if acclamation gave an indecisive result or if demand for a division was made by any member. On this occasion the President's order: 'Those in favour of the motion say Aye', was answered by a full-throated roar from the non-officials. The corresponding order to those who were against the motion produced a half-hearted murmur of No's from the official benches. The Viceroy shot a glance of mingled surprise and displeasure at his henchmen; had they ratted? But there was no avoiding the verdict which, to judge by the volume of sound, had been clearly given; nor could Lord Hardinge do other than pronounce the fatal words: 'The Ayes have it.' The situation was saved by the indiscretion of a non-official who, thinking that the Secretary of State would be the more deeply impressed (the force of a resolution being moral but not legally binding) if the overwhelming size of the apparent majority were recorded, called for a count, whereupon it was revealed that the resolution had in reality been rejected. The unfortunate member was bitterly ragged by his colleagues for his officiousness.

On the whole, however, during the years when I was able to observe its working, the legislature did not do so

<sup>1</sup> Under the Morley-Minto reforms the official majority was retained in the central legislature, but was abolished in the provincial legislatures. Under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms the central Legislative Assembly contained a non-official majority.

badly; and, despite occasional outbursts of rancour from a few irreconcilable members, the debates were conducted with decorum and on a reasonably high level. Parliamentary conduct and procedure were observed; and, as at Westminster, supporters of widely different opinions, however strongly they might express themselves in the chamber, usually met on friendly terms outside it. A good number of Indian members were wealthy and delighted in entertaining their colleagues. There would be large dinner parties at the Calcutta Club, where political opponents easily fraternized.

In addition to the legislatures, both central and provincial, a great number of *ad hoc* committees were constantly sitting in India. People mock at committees as a means for side-tracking problems or delaying action. Yet they were of much use in ascertaining the views of Indians. Often, too, when some seemingly controversial question was agitating the intelligentsia, discussion with representative Indians revealed the fact that it required only minor adjustments to remove suspicion or misunderstanding. Occasionally important Commissions were sent out from home. Such was the Famine Commission of 1898. Since I had been the relief officer in what was perhaps the worst afflicted and most difficult district of the Central Provinces, my evidence was regarded as important; and I had a passage of arms with that able administrator, Sir Thomas Holderness, who was one of its members. This passage was too lurid to figure in the Commission's report; but the upshot was that Holderness, who was reported to have come prepared to curse the administration for mismanagement, went away, if not blessing it, at least stoutly defending it on the ground of the immense obstacles with which it had had to contend. I also had a lively time with a Commission, presided over by Lord Islington, which investigated the

organization of the civil services. There I was subjected to an oral examination longer than that which fell to the lot of any other witness. This was largely due to the multitude of questions rained on me by Mr. Gokhale, some of which were of such a nature that the chairman disallowed them. What annoyed me was that my answers were completely misrepresented in a number of Indian newspapers—things were put into my mouth which I had never said and were calculated to create a painful impression among Indian scholars and scientists of repute. Some of these wrote to me, more in sorrow than in anger, and I had to explain to them that the statements ascribed to me were purely fictitious, as they themselves would see when the authorized version of the Commission's proceedings was published. These misrepresentations, as they appeared in different papers, were so similar to one another in matter and in language that it was obvious they emanated from a single source; and they were clearly intended to create mischief.

On that occasion my examination had lasted most of the morning and was to continue in the afternoon. Sir Frank Sly, whom I have already mentioned in connexion with tigers, asked me to lunch with himself and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, both being members of the Commission. As we drove off, MacDonald bent forward, tapped me on the knee and said, 'Never have I seen Gokhale so poisonous as he was to you this morning.' MacDonald had generally come to me for statistics and information about the services and had once or twice dined with me, when he displayed an unexpected fund of humour and regaled us with reminiscences of week-ends he had spent with Johnny Burns and other kindred spirits.

Before yet another Commission my own evidence was of quite hum-drum and orthodox a nature; but I derived

some amusement from listening to that of others. The chairman was the Right Honourable (afterwards Sir) Charles Hobhouse, and the subject was Decentralization—a subject on which much can be said but little done. Hobhouse took a special delight in ferreting out cases where an officer had from an early stage in his service been employed solely on multifarious jobs at headquarters and might therefore conceivably be divorced from the realities of direct administration and prone to bureaucratic and centralizing ways. One of the officials thus criticized defended himself in an unexpected manner. The late Mr. J. E. W. Webster (who, by the way, had married a daughter of the novelist Flora Annie Steel) was a small fair man with a mild and timid expression of face, which completely belied his character. He was forceful, cool and courageous; he would tame a wild horse or descend at great personal risk into a dangerous mob with perfect composure. Hobhouse, who had a pompous manner, judged the witness from his appearance to be easy game. The examination proceeded as follows:

*Chairman.* We understand, Mr. Webster, that when the administration of this province [it was Eastern Bengal and Assam] was first formed, you were appointed Financial Secretary.

*Witness (humbly).* Yes, sir.

*Chairman.* And we understand that after holding that office for four months you became Judicial Secretary.

*Witness (nervously).* Yes, sir.

*Chairman.* Do you consider that this change of office was in the interest of the public service?

*Witness (resignedly).* Yes, sir.

*Chairman (sternly).* Will you kindly give us a reason for this extraordinary answer?

*Witness (tremulously).* Yes, sir. The fact of the matter is, sir, that after four months' experience of my work as Financial Secretary the government very rightly came to the conclusion

that I possessed no financial ability. So they made me Judicial Secretary.

Collapse of Chairman and conclusion of examination of Mr. Webster. But that was not all. After that Commission had returned to England I was working early one morning before breakfast, when Webster, in his pyjamas and a state of radiant excitement, burst into my room. (It was before houses for officials had been built at Dacca; and a row of temporary quarters had been put up in the grounds of Government House to accommodate some of the secretaries and heads of departments.) 'Have you seen the news in the telegrams?' he cried. I said I hadn't seen anything to justify his elation. 'But the ministerial changes at home! Haven't you noticed them?' I suggested there was nothing in those changes to make a song and dance about. 'But Hobhouse!' he shouted. 'He's gone from being Parliamentary Under-Secretary for India to be Financial Secretary to the Treasury. I'm just cabling to him to ask whether the change is in the interest of the public service.'



*Chapter XIV*  
MISGIVINGS

BY a merciful dispensation of providence memory records the happy, and discards the unhappy, incidents in our lives. Perhaps this tendency has thrown too rosy a glow over the descriptions contained in these chapters and has given occasion to the scoffer to accuse me of complacency, of having lived in a world of petty interests, of shutting my eyes to the deeper problems with which we were faced. It is true we were absorbed in the questions of the hour—that was only natural. But we were all the time consciously or sub-consciously aware of the background which loomed behind those questions—a background of doubts, of acknowledged defects, failures and mistakes. Sometimes the thing stared us in the face, was forced upon our notice, like the corpse carried round among banqueters of old. Sometimes it was a vague spectre, a skeleton in the cupboard, which we knew to be there but which was best ignored lest its intrusion cast a paralysing spell over our day-to-day efforts.

Among these anxieties there were three very big ones, touching the people at large. First, the poverty of the masses. Gloomy calculations have been made of the average income of the Indian. Any such calculation is made difficult by inequalities in the value of money, not only as between India and other countries but also as between different localities in India herself; and conditions in India are more comparable with those existing in Britain before the industrial revolution than in the Britain of to-day. Professor Trevelyan records a statement that the wages of a good husbandman in some parts of Yorkshire at the beginning of the eighteenth century were

£3 a year; and he declares that the wages then paid in England were high by comparison with those paid in Europe of that day, that the price of a chicken was twopence, and that about a quarter of the population was occasionally in receipt of parochial relief.<sup>1</sup> In the India of the 1890's as I knew it, the wages for the lower forms of labour and the price of a chicken were just the same as those quoted for England of the early 1700's; and one penny would purchase a dozen eggs.<sup>2</sup> There was no organized form of relief; but the natural charity of the Indian in normal times made good that deficiency and also provided hidden sources of income which cannot accurately be estimated. The facts, however, remain that these calculations are cast in the teeth of administrators in India, that the standard of living among very great masses of the people is deplorably low, and that, despite plans for industrial expansion and more intensive cultivation, the raising of that standard presents a thorny problem among a population mainly agricultural, wedded to conservative methods and doomed by caste and custom to indebtedness. Religious canons still straiten the lot of the peasant; and the very provisions introduced by the British for peace, justice and security have in some ways acted on him adversely; for the establishment of legal, as opposed to forceful, methods has in itself strengthened the rapacious hands that reap profit from his thriftless piety.

A second point—the prevalence of disease. Why, it is asked, have we not succeeded in a period that varies, in different parts of the country, from a century and a half

<sup>1</sup> *England under Queen Anne*, by Professor G. M. Trevelyan, O.M., pp. 18-20. In his *Social History of England* he suggests that board and lodging were given in addition to this wage; if that were so, it would be a big difference.

<sup>2</sup> I have put an anna as roughly equivalent to a penny. As a matter of fact the value of an anna in English currency, when I first went to India, was less than a penny; for the rupee was at that time equivalent to less than a shilling.

to two centuries, in ridding it of malaria and other tropical ailments? Comparisons are made with regions that have been cleared of those scourges. But how limited was the area of those regions compared with that of a vast sub-continent, and how infinitely greater the resources in proportion to those available over a far wider field! To say nothing of the habits of a people who, however scrupulous in personal cleanliness, allow their surroundings to remain fertile breeding grounds for the anopheles mosquito and the hook-worm. The critic might also be answered by pointing to the success achieved in reducing mortality from cholera and small-pox, to the establishment (though on a lamentably modest scale) of hospitals, to the distribution of quinine, and to the debt which the world in general owes to the discoveries made by research workers in India about the sources of plague and fevers and the cure of cholera. Nevertheless the task of battling with these evils is Sisyphean, and its magnitude engendered a feeling of despair.

A third cause of anxiety is the alarming rate at which, despite the ravages of disease, the population is increasing. That is a hard saying; for growth of population is generally deemed a sign of welfare and healthy national life, and to speak of it as alarming sounds almost inhuman. But so tremendous is the growth that it seems a time must come when the soil will no longer be able to support the teeming millions. It is only in some parts of the country that industry is likely to absorb any substantial numbers. Conditions in South Africa illustrate the obstacles in the way of emigration, unless some region can be sought out which either is not yet fully occupied or is not peopled by inhabitants who insist upon safeguarding their standard of living. More intensive cultivation may multiply produce. But can these remedies adequately relieve the pressure of an ever-growing population? The British have brought

irrigation to some sixty million acres, most of which were thereby converted from waste to arable and the remainder made more productive. But the rising flood of humanity soon spreads over the newly won land, the very fertility of which is an encouragement to larger families.

But for the fact that it has now largely disappeared, I should have added a fourth trouble—the prevalence of practices which are due to superstition or are enjoined by tradition or priestcraft and can be regarded only as cruel and inhuman. Legislation and the influence of a more enlightened public opinion among Indians have abolished the worst features of child-marriage—though there may still be evasions of the Sarda Act. But fifty years ago, when I first arrived in India, that custom prevailed in an unrestricted form. And at that time, too, the minds of officials were, rightly or wrongly, haunted by the belief that female infanticide was not uncommon; and there were a few cases of human sacrifice. One of these was remarkable. The workmen who tended a factory furnace were troubled by its contrary behaviour; it wouldn't burn properly and steam pressure was consequently reduced. They came to the conclusion that there was a god in the furnace and that he was angry. Two of them, having decided that a sacrifice was necessary to propitiate the dissatisfied deity, conspired against a third worker and, while he was feeding the furnace, they up with his heels and pitched him into the flames. Whether the sacrifice was efficacious was not related.

The three problems which I have mentioned, and the impossibility of foreseeing any radical cure for them, produced a sense of frustration. But we were not primarily responsible for them. It was otherwise with our relations with the higher classes. The British have had much success in colonizing, and yet they exhibit two traits which seem at first sight to militate against such success—reserve and

colour consciousness. Hence the social cleavage between British and Indians. It was not ever thus. In earlier days Europeans were few in number, depended upon collaboration with Indians for the ordinary amenities of life, and joined in their sports and pastimes. The two races were thrown together in council and campaign. Services to Indian potentates were rewarded with grants of land; and the new owners came into contact with their agents and tenants. Some made their homes in the country. Sir Thomas Theophilus Metcalfe (brother of Lord Metcalfe), the Resident at Delhi, settled himself in a fine mansion on the bank of the Jumna, which, together with the Metcalfe family library and pictures, was sacked in the Mutiny. In default of white women Britons took Indian women as wives or concubines. They adopted Indian customs, even dallied with Indian faiths. Job Charnock is alleged to have made annual sacrifice of a cock at the mausoleum which he built over the remains of his Hindu wife. Then, as more Europeans flowed in, they created in the larger centres a self-contained and exclusive society; nor was it any longer necessary for officials and merchants to seek conjugal comfort in liaisons which, however distasteful to the moralist, no doubt promoted mutual understanding. Visits on leave to the British Isles became easier, settlement in India rarer; and the Indian could plead a minor grievance in the fact that leave allowances and pensions were spent outside the country which provided them. The establishment of clubs heightened the separating fence. If short-term service and the constant importation of new blood have had a salutary effect (the decay of Portuguese power at Goa has been cited as the result of an opposite policy) upon the character of British rule, yet the attitude of isolation, which the foreign community took up, was productive of frequent difficulties and awkwardnesses which a more forthcoming geniality would have avoided,

and was deeply resented by many Indians who justly deemed themselves the social equals or superiors of those who held them at arms' length.

Another British characteristic for a long time checked the admission of Indians to the higher offices of government. The Briton's habit of self-depreciation, sometimes condemned as hypocritical, is in fact honest; yet at the same time he has an unco' guid opinion of himself. Reasons may be suggested for this apparent paradox. For many years we were lulled into a sense of easy superiority by our long start in industrial development. We also wielded overwhelming power through our fleet. Secure in the position which we held, we were content to sit back in other directions. Britain, by ruling the waves, could rule the world; and

it was praise and boast enough  
In every clime, and travel where we might,  
That we were born her children.

We have been apt, too, to place reliance on amateur achievement to some exclusion of specialized and technical efficiency. The grand old fortifying classical curriculum of our public schools and universities endowed their products with humanity and a sort of intuitive ability—qualities which have served us well in various ways, including colonial expansion, but have contributed to lead us into neglect of scientific methods as applied to industry, commerce, economics and other branches of human activity. We admire but do not imitate the progress made by other nations in those methods; and we confess our own backwardness therein, while still trusting to means which brought us success in the past, especially in the task of governing ourselves and our overseas possessions. *Excudent alii*—but let the Briton reserve himself for the art of ruling. Of that art we deemed ourselves born practitioners and were therefore chary of entrusting posts of responsibility

to members of any other race. We have now, as I indicated in the first chapter, changed that attitude; and the very rapidity and completeness of the change are a reflection on our previous hesitations and tardy advance, which created heart-burnings in the past and the memory of which is likely to endure.

Closely connected with these hesitations on the one side and heart-burnings on the other was the knowledge that Indians were more and more beginning to chafe under an alien rule. That they should do so was natural enough, seeing that we had set ideas of liberty before them and were, as we openly declared, exercising them in the practice of administration and rule through the establishment of local self-government, the gradual removal of external control over legislatures and ministries in the provinces and, more cautiously, at the centre.<sup>1</sup> 'We like you English—those of you whom we know. But when you are gone we don't want any more of you here.' Those were the words used to me by one of our legislators when he came to see me for a friendly chat; and I have no doubt that the same sentiments were expressed to many of us. One could not take exception; but the knowledge that such sentiments were commonly held among educated Indians produced an uncomfortable feeling that it would be well if we could quit a country where we, or at least the likes of us, were looked upon as *de trop*. And at the same time there lurked behind this feeling a dread: the Indian individually may well be judged *capax imperii*, but what about Indians regarded collectively? What are the chances of orderly rule and internal peace if there is no neutral restraining influence, if what has been described as the steel framework is removed?

This leads straight to the subject of communal trouble,

<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing, in the Executive Council of the Governor-General only three members are now British; all the others are Indians.

that disquieting phenomenon which forces the political situation into a vicious circle. The more the road to home rule is cleared of constitutional hurdles, the more does it become obstructed by the 'anxieties and ambitions aroused in both communities by the prospect of India's political future', or, as Professor Coupland has put it, 'the intercommunal struggle for power, precipitated by the near approach of India's final liberation from Britain's neutral control'. This at least is a difficulty for which we are not responsible. But it was a bitter embarrassment to know that we were suspected of fomenting the trouble. How easy and tempting is the syllogism. The British promote any cause likely to prolong their rule; the differences between the two major communities are such a cause; therefore the British promote those differences. The demagogue falls to the temptation and, by constant repetition, persuades himself and his hearers that the syllogism is correct. Despite the speeches and actions of British statesmen, despite the attempt made in Sir Stafford Cripps's mission to solve the difficulty, he accepts the major premiss without proof, nay, in defiance of facts, and shouts that our policy is *divide et impera*. The British official is made uncomfortably aware that he is believed to be pursuing a Machiavellian policy.

Nor was the communal trouble the only obstacle that loomed before us. At a later period a bold attempt was made in the Government of India Act of 1935 to bring about an articulation of British India and the Indian States. The chorus of opposition to the provisions of that Act illustrates not only the difficulty involved in this duality but also the general complexity of the Indian problem. The Princes foresee loss of prerogative and power. The Muslims fear the preponderance of Hindu States. The Hindus of British India dread an undue influence wielded by the Princes through their nominees upon the



controlling bodies. Nor is it any secret that advanced politicians chafe at the existence of the States and have attempted to weaken the position of the Princes and to breed disaffection among their subjects. When the Prince of Wales (afterwards Edward VIII) was in India a ceremony took place in the Diwan-i-Am at Delhi. The Prince, the Viceroy, Lady Reading, and the Indian Princes were on a dais, and immediately below sat the members of the legislative bodies. I happened to be next to a nationalist who, coming from Madras, was unacquainted with the Princes of Rajputana and Central India. As these entered and walked up the hall to the dais he kept asking me: 'Who is that man dressed in green and white and pearls? Who is that in crimson and gold with diamonds?' I told him who they were and added, 'I gather from your tone that you don't approve of their dress.' 'No indeed,' he replied. 'I prefer plain clothes such as you Europeans wear.' 'But,' I said, 'I can't help thinking that it is something more than their clothing that you dislike.' 'You are right,' he replied. 'Bad as your British rule may be, it is infinitely better than that of those despots.' He was a little disconcerted when I pointed out that it was Indian rule that prevailed in the Indian States; but it would have been quite useless had I made any further attempt to convince him that his judgement was faulty. It is true that every now and then an undesirable 'despot' may arise; but steps are then taken to put a stop to his doings. States like Mysore, Baroda and others fully vie with British India in progress and organization; indeed, in some respects they have gone ahead.<sup>1</sup> Not a few of the more important Princes are setting up quasi-popular legislatures and are assuming more and more the character of constitutional monarchs. The hereditary instincts derived from a family

<sup>1</sup> I am speaking here of the larger States, not of the many small ones where resources are limited and conditions are sometimes less satisfactory.

accustomed to rule are further fashioned by a severe training in the Chiefs' Colleges.

Personality and vigour are to be found among the Princes. Let me dwell for a moment on one example—an example, too, of the older and more conservative type. Sir Partab Singh, who relinquished his own principality of Idar to become Regent of Jodhpur, was the model of a gallant, chivalrous Indian soldier. Well do I remember his bearing at the opening by H.R.H. the late Duke of Connaught of the Legislative Assembly established under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. It was a very long ceremony. But Sir Partab, who was a Major-General and an Honorary A.D.C. to the King-Emperor, insisted on standing throughout it, though he was suffering cruelly from arthritic trouble in one of his legs. I saw his features twitch with pain and was reminded of Kipling's beautiful story *In the Presence*. Wherever there was fighting, there Sir Partab was to be found. He was in China during the Boxer rising and happened to hear that the Germans, who participated in the expedition to Peking, scornfully referred to his Lancers as 'Indian coolies'. Some years afterwards one of the German mediatized Princes was touring in India and was invited to stay with the Maharaja of Bikaner. On the evening of his arrival, while the party were waiting for his appearance before dinner, Sir Partab, who was one of the guests, showed signs of impatience and irritation and finally vented his feelings in the broken English which he never troubled to mend: 'I no like meet German Prince in drawing-room, make salaam. I rather meet him horse to horse, sword to sword. He then learn not to call Rajput soldier coolie.' (This was reported to me by one who was present.) In the First Great War he took his Lancers to France and expressed the hope that he might meet a fitting end (he was now grown old) in one last glorious charge against the King-Emperor's enemies.

The existence of the States, no less than that of a huge Muslim minority, forms a grave difficulty in any scheme for India's future. The advanced politician may see a solution in the absorption of the States in an India governed under a unified system. But, if Pakistan (which the Hindu politician generally opposes) is a dangerous and imperfect remedy for the communal trouble, the elimination of the States as such would be still more risky and difficult. The Muslims as a whole might concur in the Pakistan plan. The Princes would not quietly sign the warrant for their own liquidation. The States are an integral part of the country, extending over more than a third of its area and containing nearly a quarter of its population. They are firmly established. They have their own traditions and national characteristics. Who can say what repercussions their up-rooting would produce? Lord Dalhousie's doctrine of lapse and his dissolution of the kingdom of Oudh (justifiable as that dissolution was) aroused fierce resentment and contributed to the outbreak of the Mutiny. But it is unthinkable that the British Government should attempt the disruption of the States, or in any way connive at it, or abandon its task in India without devising some safeguard against it. The Princes have treaty rights under which that government is responsible for the maintenance of their status and their territories.<sup>1</sup> That claim upon us has been strengthened by the courageous loyalty displayed by the Princes, despite the allurements of the late Kaiser Wilhelm, despite Britain's desperate situation in 1939-40. In the darkest hours they have ever unstintingly placed their total resources at the disposal of their King-

<sup>1</sup> There have been developments since this was written. Should the Princes volunteer to negotiate treaties directly with an Indian Union or Unions, the responsibility of the British Government would be lessened or would disappear.

Emperor. Nor can it be argued that they are merely obsolete museum pieces. Their régime is more colourful and exciting than the staid and monotonous ways of British India. The personal loyalty which the Indian naturally feels towards one who is set in authority is heightened in some of the States by the long descent, ranging back even into the mists of mythology, of the royal family and by the essential part which the ruler plays in religious ceremonies. The progress made in some of the important States towards democratic ideals and in public welfare forms another argument against violent disturbance of their organization. Less is heard of communal clashes in the States than in British India—a significant fact, especially when it is realized that the ruler is not always of the same community as the ruled.

I have dealt at some length with the question of the Indian States, because its importance is often under-estimated by the British public, perhaps also by British statesmen. There is no short cut to the solution of the problem involved in the constitutional union of the two parts into which India is divided. Some declare that we are ourselves responsible for the existence of the problem, because (so they assert) we created the States. This is untrue in the vast majority of cases. It is true that we shored up some States which were in a shaky condition; that was done at a time when the sort of criticism now directed against the existence of States was being made against their absorption in British India. But most of the States existed before, in some cases long before, the establishment of British ascendancy. Our predecessors did their best in the circumstances both in this case and in others, such as the permanent settlement in Bengal. If things then done do not fit so conveniently into the circumstances of to-day, we cannot blame our predecessors or ourselves. But we cannot altogether deny our responsibility for certain other

policies of more recent growth, about our wisdom in planning which we sometimes felt qualms.

One of these is education, in which we have been guided by two principles, one pertaining to the subjects to be taught, the other to the management of institutions. The former was settled while Macaulay was Legal Member in the Government of India. Largely at his instance it was decided that the arts and sciences of the western world should be introduced in the schools and colleges of India. No one can reasonably cavil to-day at the wisdom of that decision. But many of us must have felt that greater care might have been exercised in working out the details. Was it right, for instance, that English should be made the medium of instruction in all stages above the most elementary? It is now realized that this imposes a severe strain on the student and that a larger use of the vernaculars is desirable.<sup>1</sup> The result of working entirely in a foreign tongue was that the Indian, with his strong memorizing faculty, could conceal abysmal ignorance both of the language and of the subject-matter. In examining answer papers I have come across curious examples of this, particularly when the candidate's powers were insufficient to enable him to memorize the whole of a text-book and he therefore concentrated on certain pages. Thus, when the question was of the events which led up to the battle of Hastings, he would reply by writing down word for word a page or two about the Spanish Armada. Presumably he hoped that a lazy examiner would merely see how much was written and not bother to read it—a frame of mind which appealed to me less than that of the examinee who, having come to the end of his resources, declared that he was now attacked

<sup>1</sup> In recent years vernaculars have been more freely used as the medium of instruction. But the multiplicity of vernaculars and the value of English as a common tongue among the better educated set a limit to this movement and call for care in its extension.

by a strong fever and adjured the examiner to have mercy on him for the sake of his wife and children, whose welfare depended upon his getting a degree; or than that of religiously minded examinees who put their faith in pious repetitions and filled up the remainder of the pages with the sacred word 'Ram' written hundreds of times. Was it right, again, to prescribe, in place of simple, straightforward prose, passages from Milton, where the energies of the student were exhausted in mugging up classical allusions which meant nothing to him? Or why set him to interpret our lyric poets, whose spirit is quite alien to the normal Indian mind? One laughed, when reading a book about youths in an Indian college, to find that the lines:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird,

No hungry generations tread thee down,

were paraphrased 'Nightingale is not game-bird for table; therefore the hungry sportsmen spare to tread on it'; and one thought that the author had indulged a pretty wit. But it was not a joke, nor was it invented by the author who recorded it; it was actually the paraphrase as seriously given in an examination.

These, however, were minor errors in a policy which on the whole has justified itself. More serious have been the effects of the decision, made in 1852, that higher education should mainly be relegated to private enterprise controlled by means of inspection and grants. At that time the private bodies prepared to found and maintain educational institutions were for the most part the missions of various churches. It was not foreseen that other agencies would quickly arise, less conscious of the essentials requisite for the guidance of youth, and some of them actuated by profit-making motives. The result was a mushroom growth of schools and colleges, often inadequately staffed, ill-equipped and over-crowded. Control through the methods proposed proved insufficient and could not

be exercised with severity; nor could more drastic controls be introduced. For any severity, any attempt to raise the general level of the standard, was greeted with the cry that the milk of knowledge was being denied to the rising generation; and reforming efforts were further blocked by the rapid creation of vested interests. The universities which had been established under British auspices were, except for post-graduate courses, examining bodies for growing legions of matriculation candidates and competitors for intermediate and degree examinations, the students being drawn from a host of high schools and affiliated colleges of the most varied efficiency or lack of efficiency; and, since a big massacre of examinees would cause widespread outcry, the standards were lowered to suit the weakest institutions. Discipline could not be properly enforced when schools and colleges were hotly competing with each other; and the exercise of some control in one was liable to be followed by an exodus of its students to another and less exacting place of instruction which was only too willing to welcome them. It may be that there has been some improvement since those days; but the state of things just described has created a host of youths labelled with cheap degrees who seek entry into professions and services already over-crowded. The over-crowding is aggravated by the preponderance of colleges teaching arts and law—subjects which involve less outlay than others such as medicine or engineering.

While the intelligentsia readily gulped down draughts from the spring of western learning, the liquid set before the masses, not being obviously profitable, proved less palatable, and, even if there had been enough money to provide a trough for every horse,<sup>1</sup> by no means every horse would

<sup>1</sup> A recent calculation has shown that universal education could be achieved only at a cost which would leave little or nothing for other fields of administration.

be prepared to drink. Only some ten per cent. of the male population attend school; and many of these leave their studies at too early a stage. The youthful countryman is wanted for labour in the fields; in his tenderer years he may just as well go to the village school; but the moment his muscles begin to be capable of useful work he is only too likely to abandon his studies prematurely and go off to swell the army of illiterates. With the girls the case is even more difficult; except in some specially enlightened communities, prejudice, caste, and purdah present almost insuperable stumbling-blocks. About 12 per cent. of the total population is literate. Hence education is top-heavy. The result is on the one hand a middle class widely but too often imperfectly instructed, thronging the doors to employment and, if they cannot win entry, smarting under the notion that they have somehow been deceived and cheated out of the fruits of their labour; and on the other hand a vast mass of illiterates, naturally docile but also highly gullible and an easy prey to the demagogue who promises abolition of rent and the millennium. This mixture promises no sure foundation on which to rear the edifice of democratic government.

And thus we are led to another uncomfortable doubt. Have our reforms been directed along a suitable line? We British have our own recipe for ruling ourselves. We have advertised its efficacy, recommended it to others and prescribed it for India, where the politically minded classes took kindly to the dose. Yet that confirmed Liberal, Lord Morley, when planning the 1909 reforms, declared that he was not giving India parliamentary government and that he could not foresee the day when such government could be given to her;<sup>1</sup> and we may well ask in how many countries which are not peopled by British or do not con-

<sup>1</sup> Yet barely twelve years later a quasi-parliamentary system was introduced in certain spheres of administration.



tain at least a strong British element the prescription has proved effective. Is it likely to prove effective in one where the tradition, handed down through centuries, is of despotic rule, and where reasonable homogeneity of race and interest, a necessary ingredient in our brand of parliamentary government, is lacking? One may say trebly lacking. There are the two larger and (at present) mutually antagonistic communities; and the position is complicated by the existence of other communities, some of them numbering many millions, each with its own interests. Secondly, the larger of the two big communities, though united in regarding the huge minorities of the Muslims and the Untouchables as beyond the pale, is itself split into separate compartments by the caste system. Thirdly, ancient and modern history has divided the country into States ruled on paternal lines by hereditary Princes, and British India with its exotic parliamentary system. It is a strange medley. British opinion demands that we should try to build in democratic style. But the structure we have raised, brave as it looked at the beginning, has not, even with British support, stood proof under the strains imposed upon it by clashing interests and world-wide problems. Can it endure when British support is removed?

India stands on the threshold of a great change. She is to attain a new status, of precisely what sort has yet to be determined, but anyway that of a self-governing country. The determination of the sort, the working out of a form of constitution, are tasks which will be entrusted to her own statesmen. Have we led them up the garden path only to leave them bewildered in a labyrinth whence the exit is difficult to discover? Will they finally have to force their way through the hedges of the maze? If so, let us hope they will not get badly scratched in the effort and that they will find beyond the hedges a pleasance more natural to their bent and nearer to their heart's desire.

May it not well be that the pleasance will exhibit more of the indigenous flora now to be found in that part of the sub-continent whose rulers were so scathingly described by my nationalist friend from Madras, and less of the exotic blossoms, the statues and the mimic temples with which we have adorned the garden of British India?

Such were some of the disturbing questions and problems which made a sombre background to our life in India—questions and problems which have still to be answered and solved. To many this chapter will have seemed to be a series of platitudes; but they are platitudes which require occasional repetition. And not to make mention of them would have left the picture incomplete, light without shadow, and lacking in those dark clouds which obscured our sky and cast a sobering and at times sinister influence across the fields where we wrought and played.

## Chapter XV

### RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT<sup>1</sup>

I HAVE tried to paint a picture of India in the very recent past and the rapidly changing present. Let us now in conclusion take a wider view and consider the initial stages of that picture and the form which it is likely to assume when it is completed in the years to come.

India is an empire and she owns an Emperor, an Emperor, too, of foreign extraction. Shocking! The whole thing smacks of aggression, greed and power-politics. And the worst of it is that the miscreants who have reduced her to this ignoble bondage are the British, and especially those insidious English. John Bull arrayed in the trappings of the Great Mughal presents an absurd figure. It is incongruous that England, the home of freedom, the birthplace of the mother of Parliaments, the universal provider of democratic wares, should, with a handful of civil and military agents, lord it over an alien population nearly nine times as numerous as her own. The fact reflects the utmost discredit on rulers and ruled. Both are obviously in need of radical reformation.

But let us look a little deeper. How did this monstrous situation arise? In foreign affairs a country normally acts through its accredited government. In India the old imperialistic slogan, 'Trade follows the Flag', was reversed. It was not Great Britain acting through her responsible Ministers, but a private trading Company, that began our connexion with India some three hundred and fifty years ago and carried it on (though latterly with growing bureaucratic interference) for two hundred and fifty

<sup>1</sup> *This chapter was written many months before the departure of the Cabinet Mission for India.*

years. This Company established 'factories' (depots for commerce) at a few places along the coast and held them at the goodwill of the Great Mughal to the mutual advantage of themselves, the local inhabitants, and the exchequer of the Great Mughal himself. It had no wish to acquire territory or political power; indeed one of its maxims was to keep aloof from the politics of the country. Its only conflicts were with its rivals in trade—Portuguese, Dutch, and afterwards French—and with British interlopers.

And yet this Company, whose sole object was peaceful trade, came to get mixed up in politics, to possess great territories, eventually to wield an overwhelming power in India. What was the cause of this anomalous result? There was no premeditated idea of conquest. Nor was the Indian Empire won (as some say the British Empire as a whole was won) in a fit of absent-mindedness. The Company and later on the British Government were forced into the position of territorial rulers. The Mughal Empire waned, broke up into virtually independent States, such as Hyderabad, Oudh and Bengal, and was overrun by Maratha hordes. The downfall of the central power was followed by invasions, massacres, civil wars, lawlessness and anarchy. Every man's hand was against his neighbour. The seat of authority was vacant. No indigenous factor was sufficiently powerful or sufficiently organized to fill it.<sup>1</sup> But nature abhors a vacuum; external air is

<sup>1</sup> Among the warring elements which at that time were reducing India to chaos the strongest were the Marathas. They, and not the Mughal Empire, were the dominant factor against which the British eventually found themselves pitted. There were some good and wise rulers among the Maratha Chiefs, but they were the exception. Too often Maratha rule was no rule at all but a system of exaction. *Modern India and the West*, edited by L. S. S. O'Malley, C.I.E. (Oxford University Press, published under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1941), contains on pp. 32-40 a narrative given by a Hindu ascetic of the methods, as witnessed by himself, of the Marathas and of the tortures they inflicted, and an account of their depredations throughout the length and breadth of India.

inevitably drawn into the void. What elements composed the external air? There were the monarchs of Persia and of Afghanistan. Each rushed in, but only to rush out again; for their authority within their own realms was too unstable to permit of long absences devoted to the building up of foreign dependencies, and it was safer for them to recognize a fainéant Emperor of Hindustan and to treat his defenceless empire as a reservoir whence loot could periodically be extracted. There remained the British and French trading Companies. The former was independent of government and bent solely upon commerce. The latter was regulated by the French Government and nursed political ambitions. England and France were at war.<sup>1</sup> The French attacked the British and captured Madras. The first clash was thus with a European, not an Indian, power. The peace of 1748 restored Madras to the British but did not stop hostilities in that distant arena of conflict. The French came near gaining overlordship in the Deccan and pushing the little British factories into the sea. Clive's brilliant exploits retrieved the situation. The next clash was in Bengal, where the Nawab<sup>2</sup> made an unprovoked attack on Calcutta and took it. This catastrophe likewise was repaired by the energy and daring of Clive. The third clash was an assault made by the Nawab of Oudh, with whom were joined the Mughal Emperor (then powerless and a fugitive) and the Nawab of Bengal. The Company's forces defeated this coalition.

In each of these incidents it was the Company that was

<sup>1</sup> First the War of the Austrian Succession, 1741-8; then the Seven Years War, 1756-63. Hostilities in India were continued unofficially during the interval between the two wars.

<sup>2</sup> The Nawabs of Bengal and Oudh were independent rulers of those territories, owing only nominal allegiance to the Emperor. The Nawab of Bengal, who joined the Nawab of Oudh and the Emperor, was not the same as he who had captured Calcutta, but a protégé of the British; he turned against the British, massacred 200 Europeans and fled to the Nawab of Oudh.

assailed and forced to fight in self-defence. But the conflicts did more than preserve the Company and its factories; they plunged it, at the sacrifice of its long-cherished isolation, into the vortex of local politics. It had emerged as the one stable power that could fill the gap left by the dissolution of the Mughal Empire; its protection was sought by neighbouring potentates; it found itself in a position to place its own nominees on the thrones of those territories with which it came into contact; it even acquired territories of its own. All this was a reversal of its old policy and was viewed by the Directors as a dangerous and unwelcome departure. Indeed, the Company at first refused the offer of one of the two areas at this time acquired—a large strip along the eastern coast which the ruler of Hyderabad desired to hand over in exchange for armed assistance; and the gift was accepted only when it became apparent that Hyderabad was threatened with aggression and revenue had to be found for giving the Nizam support. The other area consisted of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa; but the Company did not till a later period assume the government of those provinces; what it did assume was the right to collect and administer their revenues; and this was effected through a treaty with the Emperor, who placed himself under the Company's protection and received a large pension out of the said revenues and a portion of the province of Oudh as his domain.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the beginning of British ascendancy in India. The servants of the Company were not blameless throughout this period. Some account of their misdoings has been given in the first chapter. Greed and corruption were vices prominent in that age; the conditions of the country

<sup>1</sup> The Company might have acquired Oudh after the defeat at Buxar (1764) of the Nawab of Oudh and the Emperor. But it allowed the Nawab of Oudh (who, an Indian chronicler tells us, hardly credited the leniency with which he was treated) to retain his territory except the slice which it stipulated should be ceded to the Emperor.

and sudden access of power encouraged their indulgence. But the blame did not rest on the Company as a body, save in so far as it under-paid its employees and left them too much to their own devices. Nevertheless it was soon realized that the position was anomalous—a private Company had become the actual or virtual ruler over wide realms and possessed of a commanding influence which enabled it to figure as the protector of a sub-continent and to enter, like a sovereign power, into negotiation with foreign potentates. Such powers could properly be exercised only by a government. During the last thirty years of the eighteenth century government control was established over the Company's more important transactions. This process of transfer of power culminated in 1858, when the Company was definitely superseded by the Crown.

During the hundred years which elapsed between Clive's victory at Plassey and that final transfer, British policy vacillated between refusal and acceptance of the responsibilities which confronted the Company's Directors and the Board of Control.<sup>1</sup> The native authorities were often left untouched; many were permanently preserved and still function to-day. But, little as the policy of expansion was liked, and though it was resisted by the powers in London, sometimes to the detriment of the peoples of India, yet British influence was inevitably sucked into the vacuum; for there was no other means by which the chaotic void could be filled. Truly was it said: 'That sovereignty which we hesitate to assert, necessity compels us to exercise.' It was a case of involuntary empire. India is a geographical unit; and the process could not cease till its natural borders had been reached. There were, of course, instances

<sup>1</sup> The Board of Control, consisting of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, a Secretary of State and four Privy Councillors, was established in 1784 to supervise the Company's non-commercial transactions and to give binding instructions to the Directors in matters of high policy.

of sheer aggression, like the attack on Sind, described by the General who was about to make it as 'a humane piece of rascality', and reported by him when the deed was done in his self-condemnatory message, '*Peccavi*'. But the outcome of that sin was beneficial; critical authorities admit that Napier 'did a splendid work'. The motive of humanity should not be overlooked in judging of those cases where the British annexed territory without having had active provocation. The attribution of insincerity and hypocrisy to men like Warren Hastings, Munro, the Marquess of Hastings and Dalhousie is in fact a symptom of self-righteous hypocrisy in the attributors. It was difficult to watch with complacency the misrule and oppression which prevailed in some of the regions bordering on British possessions.

Such is the strange way in which this empire has come about; and the empire itself is a strange phenomenon, which has aroused in on-lookers admiration, curiosity, envy or detestation. It has given the blessings of peace, justice and good order. It meddles not with religions nor, unless they transgress the common law of humanity, with custom. Its efforts to help the masses to a satisfactory standard of living have not been conspicuously successful; on the contrary, its actions (in other ways beneficial) have encouraged a growth of the population which seems likely to menace even the present low standard of living. It has maintained its administration at a low cost and its ascendancy by goodwill rather than by arms; for the slender white force normally kept in the country could have been swept out by the teeming millions of the population, even though these were ill-armed or unarmed. The King-Emperor is regarded with reverence and affection, and Indian troops have fought his battles with fidelity and high courage. For some time past the vocal classes have been intimating their disapproval of this empire and of our presence and their desire that we should quit and leave them to look



after themselves; and they have been emphatically told that such is our intention.

What will happen when we quit? What kind of a government will rule the country either as a British Dominion or as a wholly independent unit or series of units?

In 1883 an ingenious gentleman in Bombay wrote a little book containing an imaginary vision of India in 1983. He foretold certain events which have come to pass—in some cases earlier than he anticipated. He foresaw the invention of the aeroplane and of aerial bombing, the granting of home rule to Ireland and the decision to grant home rule to India, these concessions being (as he explained) part of a general policy of getting rid of all overseas possessions with a view to the enhancement of Britain's national greatness by rendering her immune from foreign attack. The author tells how the British troops and the few remaining Europeans are withdrawn from India and the reins of rule are entrusted with the fullest confidence to a popular body. This 'stern and proud Assembly', meeting in Calcutta, votes enormous salaries for its own members and creates lucrative posts (including special provision for marriages and funeral expenses) for their relatives and friends. Finding that these grants produce a serious deficit in the budget, it decides to disband half the Indian army and halve the pay of the remainder. Thereupon General Ahmed Shah, commanding the Barrackpore Division, plants his troops and cannon in front of the House of Assembly. The members prudently abstain, on various pleas, from further attendance. India at once relapses into the conditions which had prevailed two centuries before. The Indian States make war upon each other; Bhils and Pindaries devastate the country; the Marathas loot and burn Bombay; a combined force of Russians and Afghans sack Lahore and march on Delhi; the Chinese pour in through

Tibet and demand tribute; the French send a strong naval and military force to Pondicherry with millions of little tricolour flags and instructions for wholesale annexation. Such, ends the narrative, were the pleasing features which distinguished the closing days of 1983, while far away in his native isle the newspapers congratulated the British Radical on his foresight in declining to interfere in the affairs of alien races and on having finally decided, after two hundred years of iniquitous possession, to allow India to stew in her own juice.

It is a painful picture. But we need not take it too seriously. The author describes his book as a piece of 'facile and superficial persiflage'. His fancy tempted him into exaggeration in the case both of India and of Ireland.<sup>1</sup> Much water has flowed under the bridges since 1883. The proud and stern Assembly will not meet in Calcutta but, if it meets anywhere, in Delhi; and that alone means a big difference. Two world wars have intervened, altering much of the outlook of, and the relations between, British and Indians. Internationally there have been kaleidoscopic changes—old fears and feuds laid to rest, new friendships formed. Nevertheless that fanciful picture contains a moral. We cannot regard the future altogether with equanimity. Gandhi has warned us of the possibility of chaos.

Chaos! That is a word which should not be used lightly about India. The crust is too thin above the explosive elements which might at any moment break through in

<sup>1</sup> He speaks of all the landlords in Ireland having perished of starvation or gun-shot wounds before home rule was granted—all except a stout old fellow who entrenched himself in his tower in County Galway and there amused himself by sniping at his late tenants or dodging their bullets, till they judiciously dropped a dynamite bomb from a balloon on to the tower and so terminated his career—an act which the jury at the inquest described as a visitation of God and the newspapers as an example of the progress of decentralization.

awful eruption. It is not merely the danger of intercommunal trouble—though that threatens the more as the crust grows thinner. In a land which, with brief intervals of tolerable administration, has suffered for centuries the harsh rule of despots and all the injustice and violence engendered in unsteady and tumultuous times, there was bound to grow up a tradition, a fixed idea that force and terror are natural instruments in the fashioning of human relations. That lurid past has been described by Indian chroniclers and by foreign visitors such as Bernier and Tavernier. It was prolonged into the earlier part of the nineteenth century, when British power was already rooted over much of the country, but in neighbouring areas the conditions were so evil that those years are still known among Indians as ‘the time of confusion’. The authorities in England were suffering from cold feet; they were in one of their non-intervention moods and outside their own sphere they let things rip, with deplorable results. One State warred against another. Bands of lawless Pindaries, the off-scourings of humanity, swarmed over the countryside, sometimes under the banner of this or that princeling, sometimes, when not so employed, waging on their own account a campaign of rapine, torture, murder and devastation. In 1817 the British, stirred at last into action, dispersed the Pindari bands and rid India of that curse. But the blight of those chaotic years and of long preceding periods has brooded over the land like a heavy hangover after an orgy of blood and riot. Even now there occasionally rings out a startling echo of those evil days. Some of those echoes reached my own ears.

In 1900 I was working in a district over which Pindari bands had in old days habitually roamed. In each village of any size the people had built a fort large enough to contain themselves and their cattle whenever these robbers appeared. One evening I rode into such a village. The

folk, curious at the arrival of a stranger, collected near me according to their wont and sat under the crumbling wall of their fort, chatting to me while the village officials and others were being summoned. Chaffingly I said to them: 'You've a fine fort here, but none of you remembers having to run into it to escape the Pindaries.' 'On the contrary,' they replied, 'we have an old man who knows.' When I declared my intention of calling upon him, they laughingly raised objection and said he would much prefer to call on me. Several youths ran off to fetch him and returned carrying the old man on his bed. It was clear the villagers were very proud of him and regarded him as a rare possession. Blanched, bed-ridden and helpless as he was, he still preserved a clear mind and a certain grim humour. He told me he was seven years old when the raid he remembered took place. So he must have been at least ninety years old when I saw him, and very likely more. When I said I supposed his parents had run with him into this fort, he shook his head scornfully. 'They weren't such fools. This was a bad fort, easily taken. We ran to that fort over there' (pointing with a skinny finger to where a massive structure, some six miles distant over the rolling upland, was silhouetted against the evening sky). 'That was a good fort. The Pindaries stormed this fort here and killed all the people. See that dry well? They threw seven women into it, just for fun. For all I know, the women are there still.' And he chuckled at his little joke.

The tradition of disorder did not die with the dispersal of the Pindaries. Like an evil and incorrigible plant it rose again in the shape of the Thugs, who sanctified methodical robbery and murder as a religious cult and spread terror till they were suppressed by Colonel (afterwards Major-General Sir William) Sleeman. His operations were largely carried out in the Central Provinces, where a small town commemorates his name. When I

first went to India I lived at Jubbulpore in a house which possessed an unkempt but fascinating garden. Against the outside of one of the long walls of this garden there were a lot of lean-to cottages. On inquiry I was informed that they were inhabited by descendants of the Thugs, who lived there under police supervision. I suspect that they were in reality the descendants of those Thugs who had turned approvers, whose confessions aided Sleeman in rooting out the evil and whose lives therefore stood in danger from the vengeance of any of their erstwhile comrades who might chance still to be at large. In order to protect them, Sleeman housed them in a special gaol at Jubbulpore. The fear of vengeance having in time passed away, it had no doubt been thought safe to give them greater freedom. They were quite well-behaved and soon after my arrival were removed and settled upon a large space of land in the suburbs of the city; and police supervision was ended.

Yet proof that the demon of disorder lurks near at hand does not rest alone upon happenings early in the nineteenth century or upon the echoes here recorded of that time. So late as 1921 an outbreak of the Moplahs resulted in thousands of deaths and necessitated quite large-scale military operations. A responsible officer who was engaged in those operations told me that this attack by fanatical Muslims was attended with massacres and horrors too revolting to be made fully public. Twenty years later the province of Sind was distracted by the violence and atrocities of the Hurs. And there have been many deplorable intercommunal clashes. Beware lest that demon descend upon the land again!

Many have attempted to paint a picture of India's future. I am not so presumptuous as to essay that ambitious task. But I may make bold to suggest a few comments on the shape of things as they now exist and to

delineate very roughly the shape which I think them likely to assume.

Let us put first things first. Modern historians have taught us that the deepest and most permanent springs of human happiness and misery lie not in decisions by force of arms, not in conquests and treaties, not in legislatures and forms of government, important as all these may be, but rather in those economic and social circumstances which directly touch the daily life of the masses and more and more, as the masses grow in consciousness and strength, become the causes rather than the effects of peace or war, of freedom or subjugation, of law or anarchy. In India politics have bulked disproportionately large; they still form the window-dressing—all that is visible to the man in the street. The things that really matter are hidden away behind. It is the 655,000 villages of India and their inhabitants that constitute the first thing. It is here that reform is truly needed, so that those inhabitants may become better fed, better housed, better educated. The conditions needful for such reform are security from invasion, internal peace and an active policy directed to the benefit of the cultivator. And it is these conditions which must be created in an India possessed of home rule, if home rule is really to be worth while.

It would be idle, at a time when world affairs are confused and fluid, to discuss the directions whence threats against India's borders might arise. But recent events have inculcated, or ought to have inculcated, for all nations, both great and small, the importance of co-operation. We have witnessed the results of separatist tendencies and of over-strained nationalism in an age when our globe is shrinking and becoming more cosmopolitan under the impact of new discoveries. Nations must yield to the centripetal forces which science has unloosed. Something must be surrendered—some measure of independence, of

national pride, of self-sufficiency—for the future welfare of the world and of each of its component parts. Nor can any nation, however remote, however mighty, afford to travel without escort or at least without a comrade through the mazes of a forest still haunted by highwaymen. Two practical considerations emerge. Should India, having attained Dominion status and home rule, range herself as a member of the British Commonwealth, or should she contract out and stand alone? Secondly, in either of these cases, is she to remain a single entity, or is she to be divided into two or more separate parts?

That question—whether India is or is not to be a united whole—brings us to the second desideratum, namely peace within her borders. For some will say that continued union leaves two irreconcilables penned together in the same cage and that they are certain to start devouring each other. As a matter of fact, the probability of communal strife would not be removed if India were divided. The Pakistan scheme is no real remedy; for it would leave other communities in the areas which are to form part of, and Muslims in those to be excluded from, the territories which it is proposed should form Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> The point is that, whether there be union or whether there be separation, the danger of communal trouble, like the poor, will always be with us until a radical cure has been found. And the only radical cure is the recognition by both the big parties how much they have in common and

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it is with this difficulty in view that advocates of Pakistan now propose (in the latest version of their plan which I have seen) that the Muslim minorities left outside Pakistan, Bangistan and Osmanistan should somehow be segregated from the Hindu majorities and the number of Muslim units should be increased from three to ten (one of these being in Ceylon). On the question whether this is to be effected by wholesale transfers of population the proposals are discreetly vague—except in the glaring case of Hyderabad (Osmanistan), regarding which the solution is relegated to footnotes. Even if such segregation were possible, what chance of stability would there be for an India thus balkanized?

that the pursuit of their common aims and a reasonable understanding of each others' interests will weld them into a powerful and prosperous community, but that intolerance, refusal to compromise and continued suspicion and enmity can bring about only confusion, misery, civil strife and the danger of foreign invasion. We are told that there is a deep unbridgeable chasm between Hindu and Muslim. Why then was so little heard of intercommunal trouble before the vision of independence aroused fears and ambitions?<sup>1</sup> Why do we find the two communities still living peaceably side by side in countless villages? The differences in their religious and cultural ideals were no less wide formerly than they are to-day, and they remain to-day no less wide in places where politics are a matter of minor interest, or of no interest at all, than in centres where politics seem to have taken precedence of other and more important interests. Religious toleration is natural to Hinduism; and, if intolerance was once part of the Islamic creed, it has surrendered to modern environment, especially where the Muslim element is in a minority. It is not deep-seated ideals that keep the two asunder. It all boils down to the struggle for power and nothing else. Surely the benefits that would spring from unity are tempting enough to guide them (the Hindus in particular) into the path of compromise and peace. Failure to see this point of view is incomprehensible to the onlooker. It is idle to urge that the British, in insisting on some communal agreement, have set up an impenetrable barrier before the goal of home rule. A whiff of common-sense would blow the barrier down.

Then there is that second duality to consider—British India (or rather what used to be British India) and the

<sup>1</sup> Previous intercommunal outbreaks, like that which arose from the attempt made fifty years ago to abolish cow-killing, were isolated events, sporadic rather than endemic.



Indian States. It is possible that some approximation to one another in the matter of constitutional methods may ease the situation between these two systems. The Indian politician, once freed from the British nurse, is quite likely to shed the democratic frock in which she has clad him and which he has found so useful as a disguise. The sober garments deemed appropriate for parliamentary gatherings do not fit him comfortably—and fit the Hindu even less comfortably than the Muslim. He is more likely to assume some of the gay trappings to which my nationalist friend from Madras objected.<sup>1</sup> I don't mean to suggest that the full-dress of autocracy will become the fashion in India once more; but, if large popular bodies continue to function, they will probably do so in an advisory rather than in a legislative or directive capacity. If I may dare to shadow forth a dim outline of the system which India, on attaining freedom, is likely to develop for her own governance, I foresee that the real power will come to be invested in some authority exercising a limited and benevolent despotism—maybe a single person, maybe a small council of elders, maybe some other kind of oligarchy. A series of States or provinces or regions (or whatever they are to be called), each governed in one or other of these ways and linked together in a single federation, might form a suitable basis, provided the types of government adopted in the units composing the federation were not so dissimilar as to hamper common policies. The central or federal body would have to be so constituted as to inspire the minorities with confidence, and it would be essential that the Hindu majority should offer generous concessions. The Princes, while retaining much of their present powers, would more readily adapt themselves to an environment where methods of administration were not too radically different from their own; and, as members of the federa-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 212.

tion, they would contribute useful experience, the advantages of tradition and a steadying influence. Such a scheme would have a better chance than one imported from the west of taking root and developing as world conditions might demand.

It will be objected that such a solution would entrench the barons of industry and the owners of landed property in power and would extinguish all hope of realization of the third condition—a zealous policy for the improvement of the lot of the masses. What has been sketched is admittedly not the best, not the truly democratic solution. But, though not the most desirable, it might prove the most durable; and the peace and quiet that a durable government can offer are primary requisites for prosperity. Any government which can give these will do much; and it yet remains to be seen whether an independent government, and preferably a democratic form of government, is likely to do more. It is often asserted, not without some reason, that, under home rule, enthusiasm would be kindled for the uplift of the ryot and the labourer, and progress to that end could be made to an extent unattainable under foreign leadership, whose sphere of action in social and economic matters is bound to be restricted. Yet it must not be overlooked that a wide measure of home rule is already enjoyed (or is enjoyable) in the provinces and that, though reforms have indeed been made, yet vested interests, caste and tradition will continue to exercise a retarding influence whatever government is in power and whatever form it takes. British rule has initiated wholesome movements—the protection of the ryot through legislation, co-operative systems, housing schemes such as that which Lord Lloyd planned for Bombay, and irrigation works on a mighty scale. If some of these movements have not fulfilled the highest hopes, if caste and custom undermine legislative action, if co-operative effort does not meet with

the popular support that it deserves, the obstacles are inherent and are not to be exorcized by a mere wave of the swadeshi wand. A great awakening among the toilers might produce a radical change. But for the moment the masses either remain passive or react only to the occasional pressure of the propaganda machine. The politician may promise lower rents and Utopia; but it is the big industrialists who have recently published a truly constructive programme. Even if oligarchic governments should arise, capitalists and landlords may do just as well by the people as carpet-baggers and lawyers—indeed they may do better; for the capitalist will score if the people are prosperous enough to buy his goods, and the landlord if his fields yield a greater increase. Such governments, moreover, would not suffer from the restraints imposed by large elected assemblies and party wranglings, and might start bold experiments in collective farming and debt reduction. If all this seems to smack of fascism, the answer is that fascism resides not so much in a form of rule as in the spirit that animates it. The spirit of India is not aggressive or ruthless or cruel; and, if out-and-out democracy is an impracticable ideal for her, she must do with the next best—something more congenial to her own traditions but tempered by modern developments and mellowed by the natural kindness and charity of her own people.

There is no need for undue pessimism. Signs of a stirring can be seen. Old slogans are losing their hold; old ideologies are proving barren. A new generation is rising, bred in an atmosphere of realism. Hundreds of thousands will return to their homes from a conflict waged for those homes as well as for the British Commonwealth. In that conflict they will have learned much that should help to disperse the shadows that envelop India's future. They will have learned the value of co-operation not only with other powers but also among themselves. In the battle

for common aims intercommunal differences have disappeared, caste prejudices have been relaxed. Is it too much to hope that these contacts will prove more than temporary, that those who fought shoulder to shoulder will remember them, will refuse to sever them in peace, will commend them to a wider audience? May it not be that out of the tragedy of war a new spirit may arise, old barriers be broken down, and a dawn open for India brighter than any prophecy founded upon either the memories of a dismal past or the over-optimistic visions of the political theorist?

India's destiny is uncertain. Individual notions on how her destiny can best be fashioned may vary. But we who have known her as a familiar home for half a lifetime, we on whom she has cast her thrall, have this in common, that our good-bye, while laden with pathos, is no less inspired by hope for her happiness. The title of this book has a twofold meaning. Its contents are a backward look upon a species doomed shortly to become extinct, a state of things which will vanish with that species, a way of life which will soon be a thing of the past. But 'good-bye' is also a word of encouragement, the expression of a hope that one embarking on a journey may fare well. India's journey will not be easy; there will be problems to be solved, perils to be overcome. May she win safely through her testing time! Let us pray for the peace of India and for her prosperity.

♦

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